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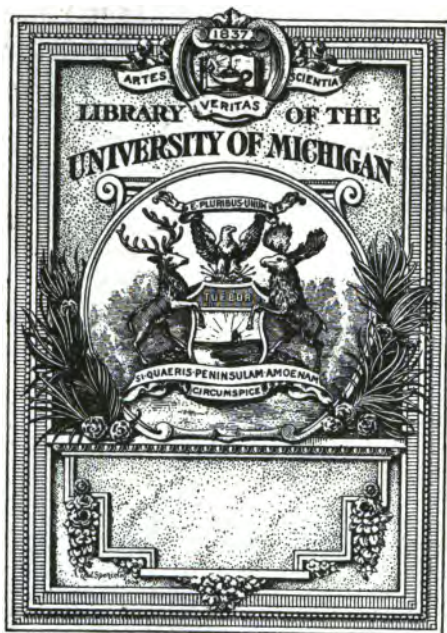
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THE BLIND PROPHET

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THE BLIND PROPHET

A DRAMATIC POEM

127210

BY

HAROLD ELSDALE GOAD

RIVINGTONS

34 *KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN*

LONDON

1903

δ/p

TO
MY MOTHER

PREFATORY NOTE

THE 'Great Voice from the Earth' in the Prelude is the voice of the suffering in all life seeking an answer to the enigma of pain. The answer of the 'Stars' is that of science and reason. The 'Sea' symbolises weariness of life, 'the Wind' pessimism and pain, while the voices of the lark and the flower of the field are those of aspiration and humility.

The scene of the vision is the summit of Ararat, which was the mount of hope and promise after the desolation of the Deluge—in the old story.

The play that follows has no historical foundation whatever. I have purposely resisted any temptation towards a realistic representation of the state of mind of a primitive people in a prehistoric age. By so doing I have left myself free to introduce such ideals as seemed to accord with the object of the play.

My aim has been to suggest a certain attitude of faith. For, apart from all purely religious considerations, the attitude of faith is the most interesting of

psychological problems, and imaginative psychology is, I suppose, the chief inspiration of all dramatic poetry.

I imagine the people of Erech as a people whose spiritual development has outgrown the forms of its traditional creed. They are conscious of high ideals, and of the bitter and restless discontent which accompanies their futile efforts to attain them. At the moment of greatest depression a sudden reaction of religious enthusiasm lifts them to an almost dreamlike state of faith and spiritual exaltation. But they cannot free themselves from the chain of long custom and from their habitual attitude of doubt and distrust. The new faith is too idealistic, and lacks that materialistic element of which in the form of images, dogmas, legends, or sacred books is generally constructed the temple of faith in the popular mind. At the first menace of danger they fall back to the materialistic and dogmatic creed of their past, and their bitterness of spirit recurs to that pessimism which finds in all spiritual rebellion the chief misery of life, and which has for its ideal self-suppression and extinction.

In contrast to the weakness of the people of Erech is the strong faith of their Queen and of the disciples of the Prophet. This faith is at once intensely

individual, ecstatic, and creative. For it is my belief that the constant effort of will in faith can actually alter the external environment of an individual, or a society, by its action upon some plane of which, save through occasional intuitive revelation, we are at present ignorant. The ideal of this faith of the disciples is the reception of the Divinity with almighty powers into the individual soul, even in this life, as opposed to the doctrine of the absorption of the soul at the last into the Divinity.

The will of God is the principle of progress in evolution, both spiritual and physical. The attitude of this faith is one of perpetual aspiration, by which alone the soul can be in sympathy with the Universal Spirit that aspires.

‘Let this opportunity be conceded to me,’ wrote Shelley in his preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, ‘for acknowledging that I have what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms “a passion for reforming the world.”’ Lest any chance reader of these pages should censure me for presumption in dealing with some of the greatest subjects that can come under the consideration of man, I will not plead the example of the illustrious poet whose words I have just quoted. But I will submit in excuse that the danger to religion

consists not so much in superficiality and want of reticence in dealing with these questions, as in apparent indifference to their existence. I feel, then, that apology is due rather for the crudeness and immaturity of my theories than for their introduction into this play.

THE PERSONS

MYTHILIS, the Prophet.

BELTIS, the Queen of Erech.

AMRAPHEL, her kinsman, captain of the host.

HASISADRA, the high-priest of Erech.

A Minister. A Child. Two Blind Men.

Messengers, Disciples, Priests, Guards,

Attendants, and People.

Chorus of the women of Erech, later on a chorus
of men, a choir of angels and a chorus of
the disciples of the Prophet.

*The Scene is laid in ancient Babylonia, principally in
the city of Erech. The time is between 3000
and 4000 years before Christ.*

THE PRELUDE

(BEING THE VISION OF THE PROPHET)

NIGHT. THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT ARARAT.

A Great Voice from the Earth.

O PASSING stars, look down upon my pain,
Behold if there be sorrow such as mine !
Terror comes o'er me that my hope is vain,
Infinite darkness holds me with no sign.
System on system plunging thro' the deep,
Read me some purpose, only that I sleep !

Voice from the Stars.

Would we might sleep ! Ages of utter space
We rush and whirl and ever onward press,
And ever gaze on the Eternal face,
And ever know eternal loneliness ;
Doomed to a knowledge more than we can bear,
Infinite Space and infinite despair.

Voice from the Sea.

The green earth laughs, the woods, the meads,
the streams,

For in their season they may die and change,
And men are mocked by transitory dreams
And the perceptions of a finite range ;
For them Eternity is veiled by sleep,
God gave them Time, that they might smile and
weep.

The Great Voice from the Earth.

O in my bosom primally was born
Hope, the old burden and the soul of life,
And in the throes of travail I am torn,
Doomed to a vain eternity of strife.
Were there not hope, then would I find release,
And thro' the darkness plunging, be at peace.

But, bound for ever on the wheel of Time,
Rent by the grinding glacier in my girth,
Scarred by the tempest and the biting rime,
Ever I labour in the pangs of birth ;
While o'er mine anguish, passionless as stone,
Law rules in darkness, timeless and alone.

O comfort me, my children, that my breast
With gall of sorrow may not blight and burn,

THE BLIND PROPHET

Till flowers fade and birds forsake the nest,
And spring's bright vision nevermore return.
Life cannot die nor hope ;—O let there be
Dreams to illumine mine eternity !

Voice from the Forest.

I hear the coming of the wind ; his wings
Beat slowly upward with a load of pain ;
I hear the burden of the dirge he sings ;
His voice is trembling with a stress of rain.

*(Dark clouds gather over the peaks—the wind rises and
the rain beats down.)*

Voice of the Wind.

Sigh ! Sigh !
Let the voice die !
Spirits of frost and hail,
Let your bright arms avail,
Silence the wail of woe,
Angel of snow !

Weep ! Weep !
Till the heart sleep ;
Let down thy silver shroud,
Shake out thy hair, O cloud !
Charm the old wound of pain,
Angel of rain !

Doom ! Doom !
Rend, Lord, Thy gloom !
Storm in the womb of night,
Leap to the heaven-height !
Split the whole orb asunder,
O God of Thunder !

Voice of the Forest.

I hear a clamour and a mighty cry ;
A thousand voices wail confusedly,
Like broken billows on a desert shore ;
But tell me more ! O, tell me more !
Tho' in thy bitter words the frost of grief
Cleaves from its bough the last sere ashen leaf,
Sad winter in my bosom crieth sore,
O tell me more !

Voice of the Wind.

I saw men toiling in the sombre ways
With souls by sin and sorrow crucified,
And limbs deformed by lamentable days,
Till one looked up for misery and cried,
'Yesterday, now, to-morrow, and then night,—
O give us light !'

I saw men on the towers of ancient lore
Thro' the long darkness watching for the morn,
While the pale nations mocked, and evermore
Star after star left midnight more forlorn ;
One fevered cry went up from every shrine,
 'O Lord, a sign !'

I watched men climbing for a fruit of gold,
Happy were they who perished in their lust,
Only they reached it, weary, worn, and old,
And on their lips it crumbled into dust.
'Now let us die,' they said ; 'we cannot rest,
 Struggle was best.'

I saw bruised women in the heedless streets
Stoning their heart to silence hour by hour,
Children without a dream whose bleeding feet
For all the leagues had never brushed a flower,
I touched the broken chords to sound ; one cry
 Awakened, 'Why?'

I saw age careless in the sea of strife,
Swaying with smile contentedly benign ;
I saw youth singing on the crest of life,
His smile was born of passion and of wine ;
Self-satisfaction, self-forgetfulness,
 Count they success.

I saw youth's vision and the children's trust
 Withered and blasted by a cynic sneer,
I saw repentance risen from its dust
 Slain by cold eyes that never wept a tear ;
One cry goes up where faith in memory weeps,
 'Surely God sleeps.'

Voice from the Forest.

Strange are the voices from the world below
 Beyond the mountain rim,
Beyond the silence and the shadows dim ;
 Sad voices, soft and slow,
Nor are they words of comfort, but of woe.

Voice from the Peak.

Star upon star in the circles of thunder
 Rusheth thro' æons of limitless space,
World upon world rolling over and under
 Gazeth for aye on the light of his face.

Atom on atom eternal revolving
 Buildeth the blossom, the bough, and the brain,
Weaving, conceiving, commingling, resolving,
 Power and life, death, darkness, and pain.

World upon world growing older and older,
Sun upon sun passing on to expire,
Fire in the heart growing colder and colder,
Quenched in the throes of a quenchless desire.

Stars for the signs of the infinite stations,
Suns for the systems that dance in their sight,
Gods for the dawn and the noon of the nations
Countless,—but where are the gods of the night?

As the moons have their worlds, and the planets are
rolling
Round suns, tho' they fade as a torch that is spent,
So the eyes have their light and the hearts their
consoling,
That the flesh be not mocked and the veil be not
rent.

And man's hope and his fear and his love and his
pleasure,
His darkness and strife and his pride and his pain,
He has made them his gods, but we know them and
measure,
As the shadow of atoms that dance in the brain.

And he said to his gods, 'Be ye lords of our sorrow.
In the shadow of mercy and hope we may sleep.'
He shall serve them to-day and forget them to-morrow
What time he goes down with his woes to the deep.

For light is a spark in the infinite lonely,
And hope but a dream in the fathomless gloom,
Night the Eternal, Almighty, the Only,
Taketh it all at the last to her womb.

Soul of the Prophet.

(The sound of the storm pauses—the peak looms thro' the darkness.)

O stars, O wind that stormest the deaf air,
O sea that criest to a desert shore,
I have awakened, I will sleep no more!

The Wind.

One wakes;—O sleep, lest thou shouldst see and
hear,
Learn of infinity and know no rest,
Dream on in darkness infinitely blest!

Soul of the Prophet.

O let me wake and see a little while
The mystery and the meaning of it all,
That with the shadows we may sigh and smile
While in the glare the systems clash and fall.
The dread of all the stars comes over me,
Darkness and imminent eternity.

The Wind.

Dream on ! Seek not to know the mystery yet !
Only to know a little is to weep,
Truly to know is never to forget,
Never to die, to change, to rest, to sleep.
For I have seen Eternity and know,
And vainly wander, wailing as I go !

The Great Voice from the Earth.

(The sky grows lighter, and the rain ceases.)

Behold the power that wakened me to woe
When I was sunken in a dream of pain !
Speak to me, who didst violate it so,
Soul, that wouldst wake me unto hope again.
Mock not mine anguish, whosoe'er thou art,
Hope must arouse me, having hope at heart.

Soul of the Prophet.

(The storm rolls slowly away, rumbling in the distance.)

Take comfort, Mother ; I thy late-born son,
Fruit of thy body bitterest for thee,
Man, for of man in travail was begun
Thine agony, to know thyself to be,—
I roused thee ; mine no easy hope of youth,
I am Mythilis,—searcher of the Truth.

Rest thee, O rest, thou lamentable wind,
 Labouring sea that settest to no goal,
Desolate stars that glimmer out so blind,—
 Rest, for I know the meaning of the whole
Tho' God may seem immeasurably apart,
Yet is His shadow on the human heart.

Not to the wind's unutterable despair,
 Not to the sea's unfathomable womb,
Not to the sun's illimitable glare,
 Not to the void's inviolable gloom,
Not unto doubt or weariness or pain
Cometh the light that maketh all things plain.

Only the souls that struggle and aspire
 Move in the vision glory of His praise;
Only the life that ever presseth higher
 Feeleth the Truth that worketh in His ways,
Only by striving holdeth to the light,
Only by soaring keepeth Him in sight.

Faith to endure till pain no longer stings,
 Hope against hope creating its desires,
Striving of soul whence every vision springs,
 Love that with strength continually aspires,—
These are the lights to thunder-ringing ways
Where the Eternal worketh out His praise.

*THE BLIND PROPHET**Voice from the East.*

The dawn ! the dawn !
A crystal rift
Lightens the slowly eddying drift
Of silver veils half-drawn,
And golden gleams
The twilight streak,
Like hopeful dreams
On a weary cheek,
While silently the mists uplift
Their pearl-embroidered lawn.

(The dawn breaks.)

The Great Voice.

O mock me not ! Say, by what surer sign
Canst thou console the sorrow that is mine ?

The Prophet.

By all the deathless hopes of all the world
That rise to Heaven as an incense sweet,
By all the upward souls like flowers unfurled,
Like flowers of fire that flicker round God's feet ;—

Voice from the Height.

Arise ! Arise !
For the skies are riven,
And the light divine
To thine eyes is given.

And thou shalt see
In man's heart My sign,
And thy tale shall be
What it testifies !

The Prophet.

By every sacrifice of that pure love
That girds the human spirit as a sea
And shadows forth the Infinite above,
The song and symbol of Eternity ;—

Voice from the Height.

Arise ! Arise !
That the world rejoice,
To the blind heart eyes,
To the dumb heart voice.
And the truths thou find
Thou shalt surely teach
With thy words like wind
And like fire thy speech.
And my love shall lighten
Thine even ways,
And thy Truth shall heighten
My earthly praise.
And My light shall be
In the ways thou art,
And the night shall flee,
And the shades depart.

THE BLIND PROPHET

For the labouring heart
Shall be soft release,
And the strife be calm
In thy ways of peace.
And the wail shall cease
In the mourning street,
For with healing balm
I will bind thy feet.

The Prophet.

There burns a quickening Fire within my breast ;
The secrets of the world are manifest !

Voices from the Height.

Arise ! Arise !
For the skies are riven,
And the light divine
To thine eyes is given.
For the Fire is thine
Of the Truth that flies,
Unto Earth a sign
And a song to Heaven !

The Prophet.

There comes a Power upon me from above ;
Lord, I am folded by Thy wings of Love !

Voice from the East.

The day ! the day !
A springing fire
Kindles the cloudlets like desire
With ever-quickenng ray.
And they arise
In tingling mist
Athwart the skies
Of amethyst,
And rising radiant higher and higher
In ecstasy and light expire !
(The sun rises.)

The Prophet.

E'en as a cloudlet in the heavenly sea
So do I lose myself, O Lord, in Thee !

Song of the Rising Lark.

Light of life, Thou bid'st me rise
To Thy solitary skies,
And Thy fire
Wings me higher,
I must sing it or expire !
Nought is night
Or darkened days,
Life is light,
And Truth, Thy praise !

Voice from the Stream.

Shrill it out, little voice, to the spaces that grow golden !
Beat it out, little wings, in the races of delight !
And rejoice, O little spirit, unabated, un beholden,
In the mood where faith and longing are translated
unto sight !

'Tis the anthem of the world thou art voicing as thou
wingest,
And the fellowship of Heaven is rejoicing in thy rise ;
Thou partakest in a secret more supernal, as thou
springest,
Thou dost witness to a Wisdom more eternal than
the wise !

Song of the Falling Lark.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant
From the heights of vision fervent
Sink to rest
At Thy behest,
Knowing that the Earth is blest.
Light serene
Of creation,
I have seen
Thy salvation !

The Prophet.

Lord, I have heard, and unto man will teach
The little voices of Thy surer speech.

Voice of the Flowers of the Field.

Kindling hours,
Sun and showers,
Petals bright with dew impearled,
Shrining up
In spiral cup
Half the history of the world.
Silent praise
Of golden days
Straining for the sun's caress,
And the mystery
Of all history—
Faith and lowly upwardness.

The Prophet.

I will go forth. O ever-kindling Fire,
Whereby the worlds are full of life and light,
Term, to whose bourn the ordered worlds aspire,
Grant to mine eyes to hold Thy Truth in sight,

That I may teach the glory of Thy ways,
Thy primal purpose and Thy perfect praise.

*The morning bathes the scene in sunlight. Below a wide view of
the green world appears. The mists arise in radiance
from the valleys, and the scene gradually closes.*

END OF THE PRELUDE.

PART I

SCENE I

THE TOWER OF MYTHILIS.

On the summit of a lonely woodland hill stands a little ruined shrine overgrown with flowering creepers. In the distance is a wide view over the plain of Babylonia. Sunset.

The blind old Mage is seated on a little terrace before the Tower. A boy is kneeling at his feet.

The Child.

O MASTER, thou hast slept, and in thy sleep
Didst often start and gaze, as thou didst hear
Voices, and see great visions, and didst cry ;
Nor did I know the manner of thy speech.
It seemed the spirits circled thee about
And shapes of fire, so that I hid my face
And was affrighted. Master, dost thou dream ?

Mythilis.

Lord, I have heard Thy voice. Direct me yet,
For lo ! my heart is ready to Thy will.

The Child.

Speak to me! For the world is growing dark;
Awake! O, be not angry with thy child!
But the tall shadows steal across the hills,
And in the forest trees that are my friends
Grow stern and far before the stealing night,
E'en as thou, Master, when beneath the stars
Thou prayest. Speak to me! I am afraid,
And ah! so lonely. Master! dost thou dream?

Mythilis.

Child, may the world be gracious to thy youth,
But, when there dawn the days of doubt and grief
That foster wisdom in a term of tears,
See thou remember that it is a shade,
And only true for thee so far it seem
The lights that cast its shadows are of God.
For all these phantoms on the glass of life
Are but reflections from a world of Truth
Wherein are woven the designs of Fate
According to the influence of the soul.
Ay, and beyond all mirrors, 'neath all veils,
With rays refracted in a thousand gleams,
Shines but one central Light and that is God,
The Sun of all these fitful lights of mind,
The Source, Sustainer, and the single Truth.

And if a man live pure and look to Him
Alway, and doubting nothing in his heart,
He shall be guided in his every step
And know the Truth and hold it and not stray.
Nor shall he meet with evil on his path ;
A power shall go before him and prepare,
And pain shall be prevented. But behold !
A man is wandering by the pool below
Bearing a message to me from the world ;
Go swiftly, child, and bring him unto me.

*(The child goes out. The old mage muses alone
beneath the stars.)*

Mythilis.

Yet once again as ever night by night
Thro' the slow evening of my fourscore years
The falling twilight knows me at my post,
A sentinel towards eternity.
And tho' with mist of years mine eyes are dark,
Sees not my heart the far-extended plain
Which night by night I bless, composed for sleep ?
Doth not the bird that charms away my watch
Hallow with song the stillness of the eve ?
Is not the day's last kiss upon my brow ?
Is not the breath of twilight on my cheek ?
Lo ! the great angel of the aged earth
Rises with heaving of his shadowy wings

And the cool-sighing breath of slumbrous plumes ;
And twain he lays empurpled o'er the sun,
Which is his face of glory in the west,
And twain dark-plumaged o'er his ivory feet,
And twain he folds about the golden world
Azure and full of eyes ; and all things sleep.
But I, O stars, as constant to my watch
As ye, when night unseals your thousand eyes,
I, tho' my night unseals no more for me,
I share your vigil till the dawn at last.
And thus to your essential orbs of light
I lift mine, lightless ; and as one who goes
In darkness, holding by a brother's hand,
And feels the power that lightens from his face,
Smiles, and is strengthened, so I feel your eyes
And claim you for my comrades and my friends.
For thou, Arcturus, smilest thro' the glow,
My brightest and my swiftest and my best,
And silvery Vega points the central dome,
And fair Capella rises, and my heart
Yearns in its love and reverence unto all.
How oft to me brain-weary with dark lore
And nightlong study of the tortuous writ
Have ye been masters wiser than they all !
When the eyes dazzled by the blinding page
Refresh them in the starry seas of space ;
And the brain pauses on its hurrying beat
Beneath the solemn march of your slow orbs,

And the soul strikes upon that surer truth,
That rock that slumbers in the central deep,
All-wisdom 'neath the shifting tides of sense,
Faith, Love beneath the semblance of it all.
Are we not all the children of the night,
The inheritors of darkness and decay?
My little light is spent and yours will pass.
The million million suns that star the space,
The million million suffering worlds of life
Will be a million million moons at last.
One fate for all, one striving and one hope!
O, all the supplication of the seas,
And foamlike faces on the tides of time,
And wide white arms upstretched a space in pain
From the wan ocean of Eternity!
O all the upturned faces of the flowers,
And wistful eyes of children in the sun
Tending in witless wonder to one Truth
That maketh, moveth, foldeth all the worlds!
That truth, for which men strive and search in vain,
Which I in this my darkness see so clear,
I, that have known the Pilot all these years,
Shall I not show the science of my stars,
That o'er the ocean men may steer aright?
For fourscore years the wisdom of all times,
The storéd splendour of eternal lore,—
That as a mantle woven of wrought gold
Broidered with twilight legend of old days,

Starred with the gems that lit dead prophets' dreams,
Glory on glory ranked—doth fold God's world—
Hath been the solace of my solitude.
But rather in the peace of many eves
The dews of wisdom filtered thro' my soul,
This hour when first the veil of crystal air
Cleaves, and the soul returns unto the Truth
'Neath the controlling wonder of the stars.
And most of all the night that seals mine eyes
Hath brought the Infinite upon my soul,
The unfathomable darkness where is God.
Till in that realm that folds us e'en as space,
Where space is not, nor shrouding veil of sense,
Unfeeling I have felt, unknowing known
The worlds in God's perspective, which is Truth;
Have known the perfect symmetry of things,
The chord that crowns the harmony of all.
And so, like yonder boughs in evening's breath,
This agéd frame of mine thro' every nerve
Trembles responsive to the eternal winds
That sway and sift my being. And behold!
This night in dreams prophetic of men's woe
A quickening tempest surges thro' my soul,
Kindling anew the fading fires of life.
Even as Noah looked forth from Ararat
Over the desolation of the world,
When the long terror of the thunder ceased,
The inexorable darkness rolled away,

Looked on the wide, wan waste of waters, stretched
So lonely and so silent and so chill,
'Twixt the grey girdle of low-trailing cloud
And the vast wreck of unimagined deeps,
And in his heart oppressed with all that woe
The hope of God awakened,—so I gaze
Upon the woe of life from that same height,
And see God's bow of Truth upon the cloud
And feel His kindling promise in my heart ;
And I await His word that I go forth
To quicken desolation once again
With the bright tribes of Truth and holy thought
And the fair wingéd flocks of joy and hope.
Lord, I am ever ready to Thy will,
Lift but Thy finger, Father, and I go.

(The child returns with a stranger.)

The Child.

Behold the stranger whom I met.

Mythilis.

Whence art thou ?

The Stranger.

Master, I go from Erech unto Ur ;
But on the road this eve a darkness fell
Over my steps,—or from the burning sun,

Or that for want I fasted these three days,
I know not,—but I wandered from my way.
But some sweet angel led me to thy tower,
Where this thy boy hath fed me of thy grace,
So I would crave thy blessing and would go,
While there is strength within me for the road.

Mythilis.

From Erech? Tell me how it fares with men.
A score of years have waned, since, save this child,
I heard the melody of human speech.
Tell me who reigns in Erech, and how long,
And how the people dwell beneath his sway,
And how the kingdom waxes or grows weak ;—
And I will bless thee then, and thou shalt go.

The Stranger.

Master, ten years hath reigned o'er all these lands
Beltis, our Queen, in Erech. But despite
The love that all men bear her in their hearts,
Despite the word of mages o'er her birth
Dark prophecies and riddles of the stars,
God hath forgotten her, and sore oh ! sore
Hath Erech been afflicted in her time.
For even in the first year of her reign
There came a pestilence upon the land,
So that men cursed their life who had not died.

And year by year beneath the shadow of death
We dwell, and year by year the plague returns,
Till once again about our stricken streets
Runs pestilence, and famine keeps our gates.
For all this year the Heavens withhold their rain,
And the soil cracks and crumbles into sand,
And the weak corn is shrivelled, brown and sere,
And the lean cattle lowing in the noon
Sicken, and there is none to bury them.
For the wan herd is fled unto the hills
Or to the crowded cities, bringing plague
From the infected fields, and all the land
Labours with misery in the sight of Heaven.
But nevermore with pity pales the sky,
For day on day succeeds in stately calm,
And day on day in orbéd pomp goes down ;
And the white cities in the torrid glare
Are silent, save the cry of stricken babes
And the slow feet of them that bear the dead.
And from the mighty temples hour by hour
They cry incessant on the planets seven,
And nightly with a cry, as wakes the wild
When the sleek tiger steals upon the kid,
Howl the fanatics, naked and self-maimed,
Shrieking the doom of Erech is at hand.
Already there is peril of revolt,
The people 'neath the palace by the wall
Come daily, and they daylong watch and wail

For bread, for bread to save their starving babes.
I saw men there, old men, who in their youth
Had heard of God's great pity, had known peace,
But late must learn the mockery of hope
And the despair that will not hear of God.
And there are weary children old in pain
And infants wailing wan and frail and faint
Clinging in hunger unto barren breasts,
And there are youths who never have been young,
And mothers who do curse their motherhood,
The woe of bringing forth in such a world.
For the great store of corn the Queen had made
Dwindles, and now the daily rations cease,
Nor yet returns the fleet with distant help.
And Beltis knows not where to turn for aid.
One man alone could stem the whelming stream,
Could cast an anchor 'gainst the flood of fate
Sweeping her kingdom to the chasm of doom.
He is the Prince Amraphel, next of kin,
Who, loving, seeks to force her unto him,
Fomenting the disorders of the town.
And oft it seems that she inclines to him,
That with his strength he may enforce her sway
In the rebellions of these bitter times.
But he is strong in utter ruthlessness,
The people are her children, so she waits ;
And she is helpless on her lonely height,
Oh ! we are sore afflicted in her time.

But I go down from Erech unto Ur,
For there, men say, the need is not so keen ;
For my sweet wife hath perished in the plague,
And after her my children one by one
Have slipped away from me along her road.
And tho' I care not if I die or live,
Life spurs me unto Ur where dwell my kin.
(He looks at Mythilis and pauses suddenly.)
Thou hearest not, O Lord !

The Child.

O hush ! he prays.
(Mythilis rises and stands inspired.)

The Stranger.

He rises. In what majesty he stands !
And his eyes lighten in what glory !

The Child.

Hush !

The Stranger.

What sees he ?

The Child.

He is blind.

*THE BLIND PROPHET**The Stranger.*

I tremble !

The Child.

Hark !

Mythilis.

Lord, I have heard Thy sign ; direct me yet,
For lo ! my heart is ready to Thy will.

Voice from the Height.

Arise ! Arise !
For the skies are riven,
And the light divine
To thine eyes is given.
And thou shalt see
In men's heart My sign,
And thy tale shall be
What it testifies !

The Child.

The spirit is upon him. To thy knees !

The Stranger.

Surely the threshold and the courts of Heaven !

*(They kneel on either side of Mythilis, who stands with
arms uplifted in the moonlight.)*

Voice from the Height.

Arise ! Arise !
That the world rejoice,
To the blind heart eyes,
To the dumb heart voice ;
And I make My choice,
For thy life is Mine,
And thy heart I fill
With My quickening wine,
And thy soul I thrill
By My kindling rod,
By the Truth divine
Of the Fire of God.

Mythilis.

I will go forth to Erech. Come, my child,
Give me my staff ; thine arm shall stay my steps ;
And thou, my son, shalt set us on the road,
And I will bless thee there, before we part.

The Child.

Master ! What sayest thou ? What wilt thou do ?

Mythilis.

I will go forth to Erech, to man's woe.

The Stranger.

To Erech ? Hast thou strength for such a road ?

Mythilis.

I bear the message of the Lord of Life.

The Child.

Wilt go unto the world ? To speak with men ?

Mythilis.

Ay, let us hasten ; there is much to tell.

The Stranger.

And wilt thou leave the shelter of thine age ?

Mythilis.

My faith, My Truth, my stars are with me yet.

The Child.

But if thou stumble in thy halting steps ?

Mythilis.

He who will give me light will lead my feet.
Come, child, the night is cool. Come, let us go.

The Child.

O Master ! To the world ? The gleaming world ?
(*They go out. The child leading Mythilis.*)

THE SCENE CLOSES.

INTERLUDE

(*Enter the Chorus in the dress of men and women of Erech.
They take their places in the Orchestra below the scene,
and chaunt the following Hymn of Invocation.*)

Chorus.

Father of All, in whom we move,
And all the ordered worlds above
Pass onward timelessly to prove
The eternal ranges of Thy love ;
In Thee the sounding systems roll,
Thou art the Law of all their ways,
Their power, their impulse is Thy soul,
Their voice the thunder of Thy praise.
In Thee their race of glory runs ;—
Ring out, O chorus of the suns !

THE BLIND PROPHET

Creator Spirit, Lord of Time,
Who movest thro' the ages' range,
That hour by hour the passing chime
Rings progress thro' the realms of change.
In deepening flower, in strengthening nerve,
In quickening sense be Thine the praise !
O help us, Lord, that we preserve
The perfect use that makes Thy ways,
That evermore we move with Thee
Upward unto Eternity.

Son of the Holiest, Perfect Praise,
Incarnate ere the worlds began,
The Victim that the worlds upraise
Wherever suffers beast or man,
Thou art the Term to which we tend,
'Mid all the shades alone Thou art,
Thou the Beginning and the End,
The timeless Truth of Nature's heart ;
To Thee we climb, to Thee we call,
O All in God, O God in All !

SCENE II

BEFORE THE GATES OF THE LITTLE CITY OF AMIDA.

Noon. A little shady grove of palms on either side of the white road. To the left a well beneath the trees.

*In the distance the gate, with the walls and roofs of Amida,
Beyond thro' the trees the distant towers and pyramids of Erech.*

Enter the Prophet and the Child.

The Prophet.

HERE let us rest awhile, that we may pass
On unto Erech in the evening cool.
Sleep, child, for thou art weary.

(A woman comes out of the city.)

The Child.

Master, say,
Whence is it that thy steps erewhile so weak
Are grown so swift and strong, and thy sweet brow
Bright that I scarce may know thee?

(He leads the Prophet to the well. They sit.)

The Prophet.

Hark ! there comes

A woman, there is sorrow in her step.

(*To the woman.*) Give me to drink.

The Woman.

I have no vessel, sir,

Wherewith to draw thee water from the depth.

The Prophet.

Woman, the land is weary wanting rain ;

And O ! thy heart is hard for lack of tears.

Loosen thy load. Let down. Give me to drink.

The Woman (weeping).

O Master, here is peace. Here let me stay.

(*Kneels at his feet.*)

The Prophet.

Woman, why weepest thou ?

The Woman.

O Lord, behold

The child that I have borne but one short moon,

The little lodestar of my loneliness,

Lies now—not rosy-warm beneath my breast,

But 'neath the lilies, lightless, cold, and still.
His sire was slain in Erech six moons past,
And now for all my life I weep alone.

The Prophet.

Woman, where is thy son? Behold him nigh,
Nearer than ever in the nestling days
Pressing his rosy breast unto thine own,
Nearer than ever in the yearning days
Pressed to thy labouring heart still closer yet;
Nearer than then,—ay, on the breast of God.
Speak to him in the silence, for he hears,
Wiser than all the ages is his speech,
And thou shalt learn of him, for he is kind,
And thou shalt hold him ever thine apart,
And thou shalt look to him in all thy needs,
And he shall be the light of all thy days
Until he lead thee surely to his peace.

*(As he speaks, several others enter and stop to listen
wonderingly.)*

A Man.

O Lord, we are afflicted many years,
With plague and famine. Tell us, doth God sleep?
(They gather round him.)

The Prophet.

Ay, in the secret heart of man God sleeps,
E'en as the summer in the driven seed,
And strength of stem and roots that bind the earth
And breath of fragrant blossoms, light of leaves,
Love of the kissing bees and sheltering birds,
Song, life, joy, praise, and glory silent sleep
Within the chilly darkness of its sheath.
Like unto seeds the quickening souls of men
Are scattered blindly by the winds of fate,
Till in some hour supreme their course is stayed,
And in the silence of the soul awakes
A little stir of being which is hope ;
And faith, a small frail finger, thro' the soil
Slips shyly forth to hold it in its place.
Then the rains foster, and the gale is mild,
And the whole earth is kinder to its spring.
Till the bright shoots in aspiration rise,
And the sweet leaves unfold like charity,
And the full blossom by the grace of time
Crowns it with glory in the smile of heaven.

(He rises and moves towards the city.)

A Man.

Master, abide with us, and make us wise !

The Prophet.

Nay, for I go to Erech. But awhile
Men's hearts there are not ripe, and God will send
An angel first. So I will teach you love
And faith and patience, if ye sit with me;
And that is all the wisdom that ye need.

Others.

A Prophet! Haste and follow! Hail! A Prophet!
*(He enters the city followed by the people running and
crying, 'A Prophet!')*

THE SCENE CLOSES.

INTERLUDE

Chorus of the Women of Erech.

Weep for the woes of Erech, sisters, weep!
So, sitting lowly on the dust in pain,
Weep for our woes again,
That having eased our burden we may sleep.

Semi-chorus.

Look forth upon the sea! What hope is there?
What cooling shadow o'er the orbéd sun
To speak of mercy?

Semi-chorus.

None!

There is no sail upon the quivering sea,
There is no shadow from the blinding glare;
Rest comes alone with death when life is run,
Hope lies alone with the infinite to be.

Chorus.

We are weary of long sighing,
We are weary of slow tears,
And the fires of hope undying
That have led us thro' the years;
And the stars of vision falling,
And the blighted faith of yore,

And the ghostly memories calling
For the joys that are no more.

Strophe.

As when dawn on dawn returneth
To a sufferer old in pain,
And the woe in which he burneth
Hope prolongeth but in vain ;
And he seeth Death slow-stealing,
And he smileth for the end,
As the wings are wide with healing
That approach but to befriend ;—

Antistrophe.

So we, watching late and lowly
'Mid the twilight of our day
For the hours that die so slowly
And the flowers that fade away,
Look and long for Death to fold us
In her infinite control,
And to shield us and to hold us
From the strivings of our soul.

Strophe.

For we watch the beasts returning
To the dust ; they may forget,
For their passion leaves no yearning,
And their rest hath no regret ;

THE BLIND PROPHET

And they know not hope's derision,
Discontent and driving fear,
In the bliss of bounded vision,
Perfect wisdom in their sphere.

Antistrophe.

So we gaze on life around us
In the all-adjusting plan,
And we wonder who hath bound us
Where there is no place for man.
Chasing shadows that evade us,
Make we sport or mockery
For unheeding hands that made us?
O! 'twere better not to be!

Chorus.

For we weary of long sighing,
For we weary of slow tears,
And the fires of hope undying
That have led us thro' the years ;
But we need no star for guidance
'Mid the darkness of that deep,
Where the sweetest song is silence,
And the sorest burden sleep.

SCENE III.

THE PLACE OF JUDGMENT WITHIN THE GATE OF ERECH,

At the back of the scene is the Temple of the Seven Spheres, a lofty pyramid of seven square stages, each stage faced with the colour sacred to the planet to which each is dedicated. The altar is at the top. A broad flight of steps, flanked by colossal brazen Cherubim, leads to the Temple-gate, and thence to each successive stage.

Before the Temple is a wide, open square between the City and the Royal Palace, which is likewise raised upon a platform of marble with a broad flight of steps at the centre. Upon this platform and before the Palace is the Throne of Justice.

Opposite to the Royal Palace is the City of Erech, and between the Palace and the Temple is the City Gate.

A vast crowd are surging round the Palace crying for bread. Guards are defending the steps.

Chorus.

O God! the tempest gathers! That last cry
Rang shrill with curses and the lust of death!
O, this is pitiful! Be patient! Peace!

(Tumult.)

A Minister (to the people).

Be patient, friends! Have ye forgotten yet
How the great Queen doth love you? Do ye dream

She would not help you were the help at hand ?
Have you forgotten how she pales with pain,
Like a lost angel, pity-bound to earth,
Yet lovelier for some loss of loveliness ?
In truth she seems so sorrowful, so fair,
That those who look upon her are afraid,
Where still she sits in her dim-pillared halls
Encompassed by the splendours of dead kings,
Listening afar in sombre loneliness.
About her gloom the glories of the past,
But in her heart is darkness more than death.
Dull as the moan of ocean thro' the night
Comes the low murmur of these waves of men,
Ruthless as ocean beats upon the shore,
So beats her people's cry upon her heart.
I watched her darkly there, I heard her moan,
And even as a wretch beneath the lash
Quivers with pain thro' all his bleeding limbs,
So doth she flinch, when thus she hears your cry.
Last eve a woman came unto her throne
With a dead child plague-stricken on her breast,
Crying, ' I have no shroud to bury him,
Bury ye him ! ' and laid it on the steps.
Then the great Queen arose and lifted it,
And, taking it plague-stricken to her breast,
Folded it in her mantle for a shroud
Purple and sewn with pearls. Can ye forget
How she hath toiled and hoped for you and wept ?

Or are ye doubtful but she loves you still?
Can ye not trust her? Will ye break her heart?

Semi-chorus.

As in a forest on a day of gales
Hovers a lull of wan, dispended calm,
And the beam slants adown the drenchéd aisles,
And the old boughs smile palely up for peace,—
So for a space the storm of wrath is still.

Semi-chorus.

Ay, but with moan of menace from far hills
Eddies anew the panic of the clouds,
Rages again the battle with the blast,
Till from the sounding fury of that scourge
Even the veteran flinches,—thus again
Surges the storm of passion and despair;
See, the ranked guards press closer on the steps!

(*Tumult.*)

Minister.

Have I not told you how the Queen hath sent
To all the tributary lands for corn?
The tribute will be corn in place of gold.
The men of Elam, Ob, and Armadon
Refuse the tithe upon their mountain crops;
But from the islands comes a countless fleet,
Only this recent tempest scatters them.
But every hour is hope. Be patient yet!

Chorus.

Patient? There surges in a whirl of wrath
A tempest thro' the people, terrible !
They rush upon the spears, they storm the steps !
God ! Thou alone canst save us !
(*Tumult. Enter the Queen from the Palace.*)

Semi-chorus.

Lo ! the Queen !
See ! from the shadow of her halls she comes
Calm thro' the crowded courts where minions cower ;
Still thro' the startled guards that dare not stay,
Out to the sunlight 'mid the shivering steel,
And stands before the raging sea of men
When blood runs and rage bellows and swords strike,
White-robed, and crowned, and quiet on the steps !

Semi-chorus.

And, as when torn by tempest, lashed by hail,
The ponderous billows thunder on the shore,
There goes a gleam upon the labouring surge
And the winged halcyon poises on the deep,—
So, hushed by that calm light of loveliness,
The clamouring voices dwindle and die off,
The waves of passion fall and swoon away.

The Queen.

Strive not, my people, we are old in pain.
Is life so sweet that we must fear to die ?
The Heaven that seared our hopes and sent no rain,
Hath brushed his windy plumes across the deep,
Scattering in darkness our salvation's sails.
There is no longer hope of human help,—
Cry ye for mercy to your fathers' gods,
If they can aid and in them there be grace,
And will to hear you. Would you have me plead ?
Or would ye have me menace the Most High,
Or bribe them with a holocaust of slaves ?
Have I not piled such splendours to their name
To move with pomp of subject majesty ?
Have I withheld my treasures from their shrines,
Or stinted silver or demurred of gold ?
Have I not set a watch among the winds
With dazzling splendours to outstare the stars ?
And how have they rewarded ? With their plagues !
Face the great fact—they have rejected us ;
And if they hate us, who can stay their hand ?

Semi-chorus.

Lo ! as before by perfect loveliness
She holds them now by sorrow, calm and cold.
E'en as a lion turned and brought to bay
Raging with cruel fire of biting wounds,

Sinks down a-sudden, struck below the heart,
And scarcely knowing of his last great bane
Feels his hot anguish eased, and hears no more
The stinging cries of his exultant foe,
So are the people stunned by this last wound.

Semi-chorus.

Ay, but life bids the beast before the end
Make one last effort for the broad, bright world,
So rings the clear wild answer, 'Life is hope!'
(*Tumult.*)

The Queen.

My people, cry not so nor sear my heart!
Is sorrow strange that we should greet him thus?
O, we have sat in silence long enough,
In darkness surely and a place of tombs,
To live and learn of sorrow—all for nought;—
Then what hath death for us that we should fear?
(*Tumult.*)

Chorus.

Hark! as one voice it rings and rings again,
The shrill, sharp cry for life, for life and hope!
And as when skies are heavy, oft at eve
There goes a little sigh up from the earth
And strikes the low, dull clouds and rends the pall,
And down the rift a golden star looks thro',

So on her brow there breaks a little light
As tho' some hope were kindled in her heart.

The Queen.

Sons unto sorrow, do ye cry to live?
The shadow of death's coming wakes again
The fluttering hope that is the voice of life.
Stronger it is than life and more divine,
And hope it brings to find that there is hope.
Have I not known it in my heart these years
To strive for you, to hope for you and weep?
Who taught despair to hope? Told night of day?
Behold the gleam of some essential Truth,
Some mystery that makes musical the world.
I never knew how Heaven was near till now.—
Then, let us take our sorrows in our hands
With striving will and upwardness of soul,—
For what is faith but upwardness of soul?—
And make one cry unto the God of Hope
Whom thus the children of despair attest.

Chorus.

See how she moves down slowly thro' the midst,
Across the lengthening shadows of the square,
And passes thro' the brazen Cherubim
She set on either side the lovely steps,
To climb the temples of the seven spheres,
Gleaming with marbles of the sacred hues,—
And all the people follow in a dream.

(Exit the Queen, followed by her people.)

INTERLUDE

(Sunset. The scene is left empty, save for the guards by the gate, and the chorus as before.)

Chorus.

In the time of the twilight prayer,
Most grateful unto Heaven,
When veils of tender-tinted air
Mantle the mystic even ;
When earth in rapture yields
The incense of sweet fields,
And hallowed calm
Her pensive psalm
From voice profane enshields ;
Now God will lean
Thro' the crystal clear,
The inviolate serene,
And hear.

In the time of the twilight praise
That stayeth not for words,
When all the gloaming woodland ways
Are ringing with bright birds ;

When upward larks arise
To beryl-bosomed skies,
And heaven distils
O'er lonely hills
Glory that sanctifies,—
Now God will gaze
Upon our pain
In grace, to work His praise
Again.

In the time of the twilight peace
When earthly cares depart,
And willing slumber's cool release
Steals o'er the burdened heart,
When a melodious breeze
Sighs up from gloaming seas,
And gently shakes
The leaves and wakes
Life 'mid the languid trees ;
God will condole
Our time-long grief
Sending our weary soul
Relief.

Voice of the People from the Temple.

Lord, to our cry of misery incline,
Send to our tears the rainbow of Thy sign,
To lift the lowest were the most divine,
Hear us, O Heaven !

Chorus.

If we have ever mournéd in Thy sight,
If we have waked a woe-bewildered night,
And risen in darkness deeper for the light,
Hear us, O Heaven !

The People.

We whom Thou madest are brought very low,
Wouldst Thou destroy that Thou afflictest so ?

Chorus.

Thy hand is heavier than we can bear ;
Put us not from Thee unto our despair.

Choir of Angels invisible.

Lift your eyes
To the wells of light,
That your hearts be wise
And your ways be bright !
For the quickening springs
Of the living fire
Are unto the wings
That forever aspire ;
And the soul that flies
For the holiest height
Hath his desire
Forever in sight !

The People.

Thou who didst found our fathers' house of yore,
And stablish it in glory, O restore !
That we may glorify Thy name once more,
Hear us, O Heaven !

Chorus.

By the pure waters of Thy healing sea
O let our bitter cry come into Thee.

The Angels.

He that despiseth
Earthly things
Like the lark upriseth
On raptured wings ;
And his lack is filled
With the things of earth,
And his soul is thrilled
With a light of mirth ;
For he that prizeth
The song he sings
Filleth his dearth
From the heavenly springs.

(Fainter.)

Lift your eyes
To the wells of light,
That your hearts be wise
And your ways be bright !
For the soul that flies
For the living fire
Hath his desire
Forever in sight !

Chorus.

I am refreshed. A deadening weight doth roll
Suddenly, softly from my burdened soul.

There is come a breeze upon us in our heat.
Breathe ! Breathe ! O cool upon my breast !

Its wings are heavy as with incense sweet,
Ah ! we were sore opprest !
Its wings are heavy with a balm of healing,
And over twilight seas in music stealing
It sigheth to my spirit, 'Be at rest !'

Strophe.

In the twilight dells of the deep
Where no turbulent waters roll,
Hope, like a glimmering pearl, doth sleep
In the secret ways of the soul.

Ay, shrouded from earthly sight
 'Mid the veils of eternal shade,
Like the first pale rift of the morning light
 In the depth of the dark it is laid.
May be it is but a dream,
 But we hold it was given for prayer,
As a timely pledge of the help supreme
 Of the Power that planted it there.

Antistrophe.

For if we could live as lives
 The butterfly in his ray,
Enjoy for the day what the daylight gives
 And flutter and pass away,
We might love for the joy love brings,
 We might weep for the light of tears,
And daylong dance in a Heaven of wings,
 Nor wit of the wintry years.
We might know ourselves for an hour
 And live in the golden sun,
And sip of Life's honey and sleep in Life's flower,
And die when our day was done.

Strophe.

But over our ways of life
 There is woven a world of shades,
The flickering veil of an inward strife
 That lightens and flares and fades.

THE BLIND PROPHET

And over the joys that be
The shadow of death is cast,
And the haunting shadow of days that flee
And sweet pale shade of the past.
And we pine for the future days,
For the present is never ours,
And we lose ourselves in the shadowy ways,
Doubtful of sun and showers.

Antistrophe.

On the way of the urging fire
Unattainable terms are set,
And the present is bound by a vain desire
And the past by a vain regret.
And we weep that we seek to drain
From hours that so lightly flee
The draughts of love, yet athirst remain
Unslaked by Eternity.
But we hold it was born from above
To lead us to worlds untrod,
And we dream that Eternity's light is Love,
And Hope the awakening of God.

SCENE IV

AS BEFORE.

*(The scene is still empty save for the guards at the gate.
It is dusk.)*

Voices afar off.

A Prophet! A Prophet!

(Several persons enter wondering from the Temple.)

Chorus.

I hear a tumult and a mighty cry,
I see men running—Wherefore? What is here?
As when a fire upon the far wide flats
Sweeps with destruction thro' the hours of sleep,
And there come runners with a cry of fear
To start the sleepers flying from their fate,—
So come men running—Hark! they cry, 'A Prophet!'

*As the tumult increases, more and more return from the
Temple in wonder.)*

And still the roaring grows and still they run,
And still the wonder quickens in men's eyes,
The thrill of spirit and the flash of feet,
The light of flying raiment, men on men
Running, until the city rings with hope!

*(Many persons pass over the stage running and crying,
'a Prophet!')*

A Man from the Temple.

Whence is this tumult and why cry ye so?

A Man running.

A stranger is at hand, I know not whence ;
I met him far without the city walls,
But peace is in his steps and balm of heart,
And stilling music breaketh in his speech.
An aged man he is yet stately, blind
Yet God's great quiet looks out of his eyes,
Silence and wisdom wait upon his steps.
So wonderful is he, men gaze on him,
And live henceforth as in their noblest hour ;
He knows the darkest passions of men's heart,
The stillest hour of all a woman's pain ;
And so they come and weep, and at his feet
They lay their burdens and return and sleep.

(Exit crying as before.)

Chorus.

The cry hath ceased, and all the air is calm.
There is a stillness in the pristine blue
Lone 'neath the eternal stars, where no wind strays,
There is a quiet in the central sea,
Where no wave sways,—so is it with the soul—
Its depths are folded in eternal silence.

*(The cries of those running die away in the distance.
There is a pause of silence and expectation. Then
enter, led by the Child, the Prophet, a great crowd
following quietly.)*

A Man from the Temple (to the Prophet).

O Master, who art thou? What teachest thou?

The Prophet.

I am the son of solitude. My tale
Is of the mystery and the perfect praise
And the suggestion of eternal things.
I come and go like wind and voiceful rains
That minister at eve to weary lands,
And for their meed have music, and expire.

Chorus.

What fellowship of purity is this
Whereby the children seek him? See they run,
And, spilling their bright roses at his feet,

They garland him about with clasping hands
Like flowers atiptoe for the smile of Heaven.

The Prophet.

Hail, little children, bosomful of blooms
Fresh gathered from the woodlands of the world !
Hail, little angels, spiritful of dreams
Fresh gathered from the meads of Paradise !
Scatter your dreams like flowers upon Life's way ;
Woe to the man that treads them to the dust !
Are they not truer than the ages' lore ?
Wiser than all the wisdom of the world ?
Come ye not latest from the eyes of God ?

(The Prophet passes on, the crowd following him.)

Chorus.

See how the people throng the Prophet's steps !
He leads them thro' the twilight from the town
Towards the Hill of Grace to teach them there.
And as a mother with a waking child
Hushes it slow to slumber, lays it down
And with a sigh is turned to depart,
But with a wave of longing all her soul
Yearns, as she goes and presses down her heart
Lest it should wake anew,—so goes the eve
In one sharp passionate thrill. And night sweeps on
Swift o'er the glory of the golden plain

Fair with rich gardens and soft clustering palms,
O'er the broad waters of the great, bright twins
Bearing their stately burden to the deep,
O'er the lone silver of the far, faint snows,
O'er the wide bounding silence of the waste,
And the wan shadow of the boundless sea.

(Once more the scene is left empty. Night draws on.)

INTERLUDE

Chorus.

There thrilled from the land of light
When our help was far
Hope, thro' the infinite
Pointing,—a star.

Strophe.

For there ringeth a voice in the prime,
And the birds arise
And arrow from clime unto clime
Thro' the shifting skies.

Antistrophe.

Like shafts is their fiery flight
From the bow of the wind ;
Unerring thro' dark and thro' bright,
Tho' their will be blind.

Strophe.

We were brought to the brink of the night,
To the bourn profound,
And blind as the beasts was our sight
And as straitly bound.

Antistrophe.

We stood 'mid the winds at strife,
By the moving deep
Whose tides are the truths of life
That men smile or weep.

Strophe.

And sudden the soul was stirred
And the darkness reft,
And hope like a white-winged bird
Thro' the storm ways cleft.

Antistrophe.

And we follow the silver rift
Thro' the blinding night,
And we wit no more than the swift
Of his tracks of flight.

Strophe.

But we know that at last we shall rest,
For the light is true
That bringeth the bird to his nest
Thro' the boundless blue.

Antistrophe.

Upon desolate paths we have trod,
But there gleams afar
Hope, like the finger of God
Pointing,—a star.

SCENE V

THE SAME.

*(The Queen enters alone from the Temple, and seats herself
on the Throne of Justice before the Palace.)*

The Queen.

NIGHT, and the countless clusters of the stars,
Nor ever yet one truth 'mid all the shades !
O darkness of inevitable despair,
Bewilderment of wandering in blind ways,
Hope in my visions that my mind derides,
Help in my peril that my soul abhors,
Heavenward, derision of the heedless stars,
Earthward, my degradation or my doom !
One hand alone can save me from the gulf,—
Amraphel in his strength, his ruthlessness ;
And I have sent for him, and he shall save
By strength and terror and the scourge of fire,
And all my dreams be scattered like pale shades.
I am become my own misfortunes' friend,
The powers within me are against me yet.

There is no bane so fatal in all life
As restlessly to watch and strive with fate,
Feeling half-conscious of the power to sway,
Yet lacking that unconquerable faith
That marshals every hazard to our will.
Here is the blight that poisons all my air,
My atmosphere of action and of thought.
But he—Amraphel—hath the grasp of fate
In narrow faith, self-rooted, hard, and sure ;
And lo, he comes. Truth guide me ! Shall he save ?

*(Enter Amraphel. He approaches the Queen and kneels
before her.)*

Amraphel.

At last, my Queen, my glory hath arisen,
I am in prospect of my life-long hope !
For thou hast sent to me a gracious tale,
And thou wouldst have me help thee in this strait.
O ! wilt thou long withhold thyself from me
Who burn and hunger nightly for thy love ?
For even as an eagle on the sun
Gazes, till he forgets his lust of prey,
With kindling eyes that lighten back the blaze,
And all his soul thrills thro' his quivering wings,
So do I gaze on thee, with all my thoughts
Made pure and lovely by thy gracious sight.
Arise, O Sun, and crown my golden days !

THE BLIND PROPHET

The Queen.

How canst thou still this people's pain?

The Prophet.

I have walked a weary way, all my coasts,

And my eyes are dimmed in this town,

For the people are many, leaves too few,

And the ground is full of blood.

I have seen many deaths, but I fear

That the people are in their pains.

(Exit Minister.)

What is the cause of this?

The Prophet. What is here?

The Queen.

I have seen many deaths, but I fear

That the people are in their pains.

I have seen many deaths, but I fear

That the people are in their pains.

I have seen many deaths, but I fear

That the people are in their pains.

I have seen many deaths, but I fear

That the people are in their pains.

I have seen many deaths, but I fear

That the people are in their pains.

I have seen many deaths, but I fear

That the people are in their pains.

And merchants fling their treasures at his feet,
And all men cry 'A Prophet!' O beware!
For tho' the flood may ebb and flow awhile,
The towered cliff comes thundering down at last!

The Queen (aside).

A man hath risen among them? O my heart,
What tide swells up the channels of the past
And quickens mine old sorrows? Is it hope?

Amraphel.

Swift justice is true mercy. Doom, O Queen!
Who is this madman that misleads the crowd?
I urge his instant death or outlawry.
Then, if the people's clamour mar your peace,
Give me the sword to still them; no! the whip!
For kingship is as fire or storm or sea,
As sudden, as relentless are its dooms.
For God did found it for the fear of men
Who gave the tempest terror. Ay, O Queen,
E'en as a flaming crater in his wrath
So is the mood of majesty. Men gaze
And tremble; but one step beyond the bourn,
One mad encroachment on his proper peace,
And man is blighted, blasted! Such are kings,
And slaves must know them strong and stark as fate.

The Queen.

My lord, thou speakest certain in thyself,
Nor doth thy resolution brook of doubt.
Thou hast not borne as I the beat of time,
The blight of hope. O! thou hast not acquired,
By dreams too daring and by strife too wild,
The habit of long failure; hast not known
The haunting shadows of slow-fading dreams,
The piteous children of a starving heart,
Nor learned in darkness to distrust thy light.
And yet the past stands over me again,
The lights that led me hither lead me still;
The voice within me is not silent yet.
Once more to test, to trust it and to hope!
Send, seek this stranger and command him here,
That we may sift the wisdom of his words,
Then thou, Amraphel, shalt accuse him straight,
And we will sit in judgment. Stand aside,
I and my sorrows, we would be alone.

(Amraphel and Minister go out.)

Chorus.

Lo! in the shadow of the Cherubim
She sits in darkness 'neath the clustering stars;
Lonely as some chill goddess ivory-cold,
On whom pale nations call with aching heart,
And doubt she hears their cry for all their grief;

Only one knows her living, as one knows
The ceaseless sorrow of th' unresting sea,
For the quick jewels quiver on her breast
Like starbeams dancing on the ways of foam.

(The Queen sits on in silence; at last she speaks.)

The Queen.

This is the load of majesty, to bear
Alone the burden of a people's hope.
E'en as with sailors on the labouring deep,
Lashed to a raft for many a night and day,
One to the mast is bound to strain and stare
For light of one far sail, one speck of hope,
And sees both dawn and dark and those wild eyes
Pleading with him that he may give a sign,
Till with long pain he knows, but sees no more,
No more, for hunger hath put out his light;
So do I strain and stare and hold their hope,
And they look up to me and plead and cry,
'Be merciful!' But I am blind with pain,
How should I know if there be aught but darkness?
For I have dreamed that immemorial war
Of all who cling and clutch unto this life,
Like drowning wretches on a crowded raft
Despite the blows of those who thrust them down,
Despite the misery and the pitiless sky,
Despite the tempest and the hungry sea,—

Should cease, should cease for ever. I have dreamed!
But hope is not of night and far faint stars,
Nor faith of wandering in dark ways of thought,
But of the striving and the singing soul
That larklike soars unto the breast of blue,
Broad in the blinding lustre of the day.
But here the night is long and faint the lights,
And we are lost in turnings of old lore. . . .
O whirling systems passing to your death
Thro' the Inane that knows not that ye move!
O circling æons drawing to your end
In the Eterne that knows not that ye pass!
Life, that didst breed unconscious all these worlds,
Law, that by systems shattered, worlds annulled
Built order up but as disorder fell,—
Why should not we, Thy progeny, reject
Sparks, that Thy Fire hath flung us all unknown,
Space, that Thy Void can measure not nor heed,
Years, to Thee nothing, but to us in pain
Serving to teach the terror of Thy Face?
Cares the great Sun if this small torch be spent?
Heeds the full Ocean if the streamlet cease?
Why then this hope that cries within our soul
Like the lost glory of forgotten dreams?
If it be instinct to the single soul,
Is 't not essential to the Soul of all?
Life in the offspring sanctified by hope,
Life in the Fountain deified by will!

Then tho' we see not we may comprehend!
For let a steady purpose stand thro' all,
And all is minished to our range of thought;
The void is shadowed over as by God—
The finite Symbol of the Infinite
That hides us from the terror of the stars!
For all who look to Him, all is so clear;—
O close the straining eyes and trust the sign!
O faith, unto God's breast! Could I believe!
Then were all dreams that mock the lonely life,
And all vain hopes and hungerings of heart
But the blest cravings of the restless soul,
Urging it upward to the feet of God.
I would not then complain for all the tears,
For loss or pain or fallings or false ways;
He might have lifted, but He chose to lead,
That we might thus fulfil, self-made, self-saved,
The purpose of His praise. Could I believe!

(Trumpet below.)

Guard below.

O Queen, a messenger!

The Queen.

Let him come up!

Messenger.

O Queen, this Prophet hath the voice of God,
For as he speaks the air is moved with song

And lights and thunders haunt about his words ;
While thro' all hearts the quiet of new faith
Filters like music.

The Queen.

But what teaches he ?

Messenger.

Love and God's mercy and the width of Heaven.

The Queen.

O it is hard to know the voice of God,
Alas ! He hath not spoken for so long !
Yet we believe He speaks by every man
That speaks of Him in singleness of heart.
As for His mercy, knows He not the heart,
Who for the sake of mercy made it weak ?
Only Love knows, and thus omniscience -
Exists but as the attribute of Love.
Return once more and watch and bring me word.

(Messenger descends.)

Love ? It is there the secret of my fate,
My strength, my burden, and my helplessness.
Behold I go as one who ere the dawn
Brain-beaten by the pitiless glare of pain,
Seeks the lost track forever on that waste,
The lone, wide, godless sands of sleeplessness.

Oh ! could I rest, I might remember yet
The old way swift in faith and strong and sure,
Recapture the refrain of my success.
My hand were sure again, could I believe.
Who is so lonely as who cannot sleep ?
He only who in darkness knows not God.
And as a cedar on a withering crag
My life is as a lyre for lone winds,
My branches are a shelter for no bird,—
And night by night the sap within me cries
For fruitfulness and glory of young trees.
And yet again I feel the pangs of spring,
A keener sorrow quickened as by hope,
A thrill of pity from the rifted sky
To loose the weight of winter from my heart.

(Trumpet below.

Guard below.

O Queen, a messenger !

The Queen.

Let him come up !

Messenger.

O Queen, this Prophet hath the light of God
To lead us from our sorrow unto peace.
Ay, when he ceased to speak, the host arose

Who now so long have mournéd in despair,
And from them all went up one song of praise
Sealike and wondrous.

The Queen.

But what teaches he?

Messenger.

Love and man's goodness and the joy of life.

The Queen.

O, it is hard to know the light of God,
Devoted unto darkness as we seemed ;
But we believe the light of God alone
Can thrill our hearts once more with wakening hope ;
For it may be that He will use us yet.

(Messenger descends.)

I have a sense of eyes about my ways,
As tho' some Power had marked me for His hand.
In some dim past I waited thus before,
Some old rehearsal in a shadowland
Of the great act that even now begins
Is drifting back upon my inward sense.
Yea, as the stork speeds southward o'er the rack,
Thro' the bright spaces of the quiet moon,
So wings my soul to some dim dreamed-of land,
Quiet, amid the shimmer of the sea.

(A carillon of bells rings from the Temple summit.)

Voice from a Tower.

Dawn is coming! O'er the far dim peaks
Vestured in silver on white steeds she rides;
Erech, awaken!

The Queen.

O Eternal Fire,
That in my spirit leapest living yet,
Lo! I am ready at this latest hour
To strive, to seek, to trust once more thy Truth!

(Enter a Messenger.)

Messenger.

O Queen, the Prophet comes!

The Queen.

Set wide the gates!
Awake! call out my guards! Bring forth my crown!
Arise, and mantle all in majesty!
I would outglory morn with gems and gold,
Transcend the splendours of the orient
With diamond dancings and the sheen of pearls,
For I must sit in judgment on the Heavens!

(Enter from the Palace attendants with jewels and rich hangings. They hang the Palace with cloth of gold and set forth the treasures.)

(Enter guards, who are drawn up around the Throne and over the gate.)

INTERLUDE

Song of the People (returning to Erech).

Truth of Life, Thy hand doth tingle
O'er the lyre of the soul,
And the passing minors mingle
With the concord of the whole.
Then Hosanna ! Sing Hosanna !
Sun to sun the anthems roll.

Faith of little knowledge perished,
Hope of little love was torn,
Hope of greater love is cherished,
Faith of fuller knowledge born.
Then Hosanna ! Sing Hosanna !
Welcome to the rising morn !

Life in one eternal motion
Towards the universal good,
Man unto the outer ocean
Bound in one vast brotherhood ;
Then Hosanna ! Sing Hosanna !
Love shall stand where strife hath stood !

Tho' the sighs of sorrow's story
 Stray across the trembling ways,
Still resound the chords of glory
 To the thundrous march of praise.
Then Hosanna! Sing Hosanna!
 Onward thro' the length of days.

Up and up through time transcendent,
 Answering to the angels' call,
Till the truth shine out resplendent,
 All in God, and God in All.
Then Hosanna! Sing Hosanna!
 All in God, and God in All!

SCENE VI

THE SAME.

*The Palace and the Square are decorated as for a festival.
Guards and attendants throng the steps and the towers of the gate.
Amraphel stands before the Queen in armour.*

Then enter the Prophet, led by the Child and followed by a great crowd of people bearing flowers and branches, and singing.

Amraphel (to the Prophet).

OLD man, I charge thee with seditious speech ;
Thou dost seduce the people from their Queen ;
Answer me as thy life shall pay thy debt,
By what authority thou dost these things !
If thou dost claim the Eternal for thy friend,
Then let Him thunder out an evidence ;
Or let an angel blazon from the sun
Some splendid message of authentic flame !
If not, thou surely diest. Answer me !

The Prophet (to the Queen).

The Holiest for His glory sendeth me
To witness of His Truth, His Truth in you.

Nor is there aught beside that witnesseth
Of God in me save only God in you ;
There is no other sign in all His world,
For none can witness God save God alone.
Nor doth He speak in contradictory dooms,
But in the natural order of His will ;
And lo ! the floods go down unto the sea,
The sun ariseth, and the clouds return
Their constant tribute to the little springs ;
He changeth not ; His will is perfect so.

(A pause.)

Chorus.

How still it is ! For all the world at peace
Sighs, with the sigh of children when they pass
Nigh the bright gates of waking in their sleep.

The Prophet.

Behold the lark uplifted unto light
Shakes down the silver showers of his song,
And all the joy of the wakening of the world
Thrills in his note. Nor is it he that sings,
But life, light, joy, thanksgiving, and the spring.
So with the soul in faith,—it knows not self,
But only peace, praise, thankfulness, and truth,
Not by the losing of the soul in God,

But by the quickening of the God in you.
For surely this is faith,—to look on life
And see it in its praise, that is, its truth,—
That inward beauty which involveth all
Which is the meaning and the cause of all,
In aspiration and in ecstasy,
In strife of soul and lowliness of heart.

The Queen.

Master, within thy speech and mien I read
That in thy soul for which my soul doth thirst,
Even as one who journeys o'er the sand
Whose lips and throat are swollen in his thirst,
Sees a sweet shimmering girdle of fair palms,
And guesses in their shadow there is life,
A crystal well that vivifies the land
With a sweet springing water,—in thy face
I read that peace that tells me of my balm,
And in thy lightless eyes, light not of earth,
And wisdom for the solace of my heart.
Lead thou our spirits by thine inner light,
Lead thou, and we will follow in thy steps,
And we will bring our burdens to thy peace,
Sit at thy feet, and know thee and be wise.

*(As the Queen rises from her Throne, there is a cry of
gladness.)*

Chorus.

Lo! as at the beginning of all time
Darkness the Dragon slept upon the deep,
And there swept down by whirlwinds winged, all
armed,
The Son of God in glory all divine,
Armed with the blinding Truth, the primal Light,
Crowned with eternal Wisdom, boundless Love,
And smote the Dragon with the brand and slew,
And there came forth the hosts of all the Heavens
While the stars sang the morning of the times,—
Glorious as then, behold the day sweeps on,
Blest by the eyes of myriad pearly buds,
Hymned by the lyres of multitudinous leaves,
In the pure splendour of eternal hope
And the bright promise of the wakening world!

THE SCENE CLOSES.

INTERLUDE

Chorus.

Lo ! out of the breast of the sea, O sire,
Thou flamest swift to thy sanguine skies;
And out of the breast of the earth, like fire
The lights that are born of thy light arise.
The life that is lit of thy kindling kiss,
The song that is loved of thy sylvan choir ;
The joy that is born of thy wakening bliss,
And the love that is nursed of thy warm desire—
Who art the Spring and the Life divine,
The Source, the Sustainer, the Sight, and the Sign.

So, out of the height to the slumbering deep
A flash, and forth from his earthly prison,
Like the glance of a dream thro' the dark of sleep,
Truth, that we deemed as dead, hath arisen.
O the breeze and the breadth and the beauty of life,
When the spirit awakes on the infinite sea,
And chimes with the song of the surging strife
In all that is joyous and all that is free !
With the Truth that thrills as a lively fire
Thro' all that are pure and all that aspire.

For the joy of the winds and their quickening strife
Are unto the faith of the soaring wings,
So the Truth of the difficult ways of life
To the trust in the infinite wisdom of things.
When the lark shrills out of the quivering ways
And the faith of the lilies illumines the lea,
The song of the soul in a world of praise
Rings up to the Heaven in harmony.
Is it a lie that enlivens the blue?
And this voice of the Spirit, O! is it not true?

But who can trace thro' the glimmering brake
The emerald tracks of returning Spring,
Ere the twinkling smile of the buds awake
And the voice of quickening woodlands ring?
And this Truth, who knoweth its secret birth
To the soul in the shrines of the infinite deep?
Is it sown in the storms o'er the pregnant earth?
Is it soft distilled in the dews of sleep?
For there rings a cry from the kindling Heaven,
And the silence wakes and the night is riven.

And the world is cleft with a tingling start
By the light of a myriad laughing eyes,
With a wakening song in the lifted heart,
And a pulse of wings in the rifted skies.

And the Spring exults in a wild acclaim
From the flickering worlds in the boughs above,
And the Truth shines out as the flower of flame
In hope and glory of life and love.
For the word of it all is the blessing of days,
The revival of life, the renewal of praise.

O Sun, thou sink'st in the glooming deep,
Thou flamest up thro' the blinding ways,
And Life thy child is composed to sleep,
And Life thy child is awaked to praise ;
So out of the heavenly Light Truth speaks,
And the Truth His Child in the heart replies,
As the wakening glory of dazzling peaks
Reflects the glory of kindling skies.
Is it not spring that awakes in the sod?
And this Truth in the spirit, O ! is it not God ?

SCENE VII

BEFORE THE GATES OF AMIDA.

AS IN SCENE II.

The morning twilight—the dawn is just breaking. The gates are shut. The scene is empty. Suddenly a trumpet sounds from the gate answered by a little peal of bells.

A clear Voice from a Tower.

Lo! the first flush of morning o'er the hills
Quickens the dappled quiet of the East,
The eyes of twilight kindle as with love!
And thro' the city goes a little sigh,
The breath of slumber lifting soft her plumes;
And from the temples to the broadening day
Tinkles a little carillon of bells;
And from the fields the quivering voice of larks;
And the rose morning opens like a flower!

A Voice in Answer.

A fragrance rises from the fields refreshed
By the full rains that fell at length this night

And slaked the weary fever of their thirst,
And the sere grass lifts up its blade in praise,
And leaf and wilding floweret drink new life.
Now every silver streamlet sings again,
And laughter ripples in each twilight glen,
And all the sultry streets are cooled and cleansed,
While from the quickening hills like joy in life
The soul of water lightens thro' the land !

The first Voice.

Surely an angel from the gate of peace
Chose for his sanctuary our souls this night.

The second Voice.

Surely our dreams passed up the silent stair,
Waking no echo where our sorrows slept.

The first Voice.

O the bright carol of awakening hope !

The second Voice.

And the low nocturne of the falling rain !

(Enter below a Messenger in haste. The people gather on the walls.)

Messenger.

Men of Amida, have ye heard the tale,
The tale of wonder that the Lord hath done

By the hand of this His Prophet? For behold,
The season of our famine is at end,
Even the barren sea hath brought forth bread!

(Murmur of astonishment.)

Ay, for last eve the Prophet stood in prayer
Upon the summit of the central shrine,
When sudden from a tower beside the port
Rang out a shrill, glad cry, 'A sail! A sail!'
And all the people stood in wonder rapt.
And once again it rang: 'Sails! Sails!' And swift
Men looked on one another as in dreams,
And sudden there went up from all the host
One mighty cry of wonder and of praise,
For lo! as lights across the quivering sea,
Came a great fleet, wide-winged upon the waste,
Straight for the port before a rising gale.
Then with glad cries and broken song of praise
The people ran to meet them to the port;
And I ran, and my brother and my son.
And steering stately up the central stream,
Men with bright faces thronged the glittering decks,
And loosed the halyards, and let down the sails,
And bearing up beside the crowded piers,
Laded great bales of corn upon the quays,
In golden store enough for all our needs.
But ever if men questioned them, they spake
In a strange liquid language no man knew.
And having laid their cargo on the wharf,

Baffling all question, waiving all reward,
They loosed their hawsers, and in stately calm
On the ebb-tide, they slowly dropped away.

And poor men knelt and blest them as they passed,
And rich men flung their jewels on the decks,
And some men murmured they were sons of
Heaven;

I know not, but I blest them from my soul.

Then all was haste and gladness in the port;

I saw the hurrying lines that bare the sacks
To the great mills that stand beside the quays,
Where men and beasts together ground the corn.

I watched the bakers kneading flour hard by,

Beside the ovens steaming with great loaves,

And the great host that sat around and ate;

And seeing, o'er my heart came a great peace.

And swift the Queen was sending unto you

Corn for your needs. But sudden came the rain,

So that men went not thro' the gates last night.

But now prepare! The wagons are at hand!

(Cries of joy break from the people.)

A Voice in the city.

Awake! Awake! The famine is at end!

The corn is coming.

Many Voices.

O the Lord is good!

(Enter a second Messenger.)

Messenger.

Men of Amida, hearken ! Tarry not !
Behold the Prophet comes to you ! Come forth
To welcome him with joy !

A Voice.

Set wide the gates !
Behold the Prophet comes !

A Great Cry within.

The Lord is good !

*(The gates open. There comes forth a troop of children
dancing, followed by a great multitude.)*

Song of the Children.

Now sleep steals over the golden bar,
And leaves the gates of the soul ajar,
 And Heaven is bending near ;
And the joy that lay on the lids all night,
 And hope that waked with the morning ray,
And the butterfly spirit of pure delight
 Will dance in the opening heart all day ;
For the night is grave, but the morn is wise,—
 Arise ! Arise !
 For the dawn is here !

You may see King Mist on his mountain seat,
In the dew of the meadow the morn's white feet
 And the trees in the trembling mere ;

While nestlings flicker in woodlands wet,
And insects glitter on dancing leas,
And the gossamer glints like a diamond net,
In the cassia breath of the morning breeze ;
And the lark shrills out of the crystal skies ;

Arise ! , Arise !

For the dawn is here !

There's a pulse of birds where the woods awake,
There's laughter of wings in the quickening brake,
And a bubble of waters clear.
And the glittering birch in her spangled dance,
And the flowers that nod to the flattering springs,
And the moth that thrills in a wakening trance
Thro' the delicate pride of her painted wings,
Smile up one word to the wondering eyes,

Arise ! Arise !

For the dawn is here !

O ! quick to the heart in the vernal time
Is the tingling kiss of the lively prime,
And the joy of the wakening year ;
O the song that rings from the radiant earth,
A song too swift for the wings of words !
O the leap of the lambs in their tireless mirth !
O the leap and the rush of uprising birds !

O the laughter of life in the heart ! • It cries,

Arise ! Arise !

For the dawn is here !

Cries afar off.

A Prophet ! A Prophet !

(The people cut down branches from the palms. They scatter flowers and lay their garments in the way. The crying draws nearer. Enter many running. Then with a great multitude comes the Prophet riding upon a mule. The people kneel before him.)

A Blind Man.

O, canst thou tell me if he comes this way,
The great consoler who is also blind ?

A Man.

Ay, he will pass this way. I'll set thee safe.

One Blind Man (to the other).

What change is there in all this people's heart ?
Listen, their voices have become so sweet.

A poor Woman.

(She throws herself at the Prophet's feet.)

Only to touch thee, Master, just thy foot !
To know thine eyes upon me, hear thy voice,
That I, who am a sinner, may be pure !

'Tis not the loneliness that hath not known
The love of one poor soul,—tho' I am lonely—
Nor the just censure of a pitiless world
That keeps me in the dust,—tho' I am outcast—
No! but the judgment of my truer self
Risen from the high places of the past
That thrusteth down the hope that would be clean.
Let me be lonely, spurn me yet the world,
If thou forgive me, Lord, I can be pure.

The Prophet.

Child, I am old, and to these darkened eyes
Comes many a light man knows not who may see.
And lo! I see an angel by thy side,
And one with pitying eyes bends o'er thy heart;
And yet another, instant with good news,
Is poised above on radiant wings for flight.
Go with them, child, not outcast, no, not lonely.

Blind Man.

O Master, thou art blind, but thou hast seen
The sun, the stars of which so oft we dream,
And woman's beauty that can make men weep.
And thou hast looked awhile upon this world
That seems so weary wide to darkened steps.
Oh! thou hast known the meaning of the joy
That rings exuberant from the rising lark

And thrills thro' all the woodnotes of the spring.
And thou hast watched the wondrous works of man,
And traced with praise the mastership of God.
We have known nought of these. We were born
blind.

Master, is there a sorrow such as ours?

The Prophet.

Nay, happy are the blind. God guideth us,
And chiefly in the darkness is God seen.
And we have love, and love is more than light,
And rather in the darkness is love sweet ;
For we may grope along indifferent ways
Dreaming that men are ever pitiful,
Nor know the still suggestion of those eyes
Where sorrow is most quiet and most keen.
And if God's garden be the human heart,
Be sure He builds His arbour with the blind,
To rest at noonday where there come no storms.
And even in our suffering are we blest ;
Surely the wings of pain point straight to Heaven,
For patience passeth even paradise.

A Man.

O Master, it hath rained, and all the land
Is singing with bright flowers. But in our hearts
What change is there that life is laughing so?

The Prophet.

Behold the little rivers of the hills,
And all the springs of water in the world,
Mingle in one immeasurable sea,
Whence they arise and whither they return,
And even as the sea is so are they.
So every soul that passeth thro' this life
Turneth unto one Ocean which is God.
But evermore the little springs are fed
By the bright rains that filter thro' the soil
Drawn from the bounteous ocean by the sun,—
E'en so the spirit from the Sea of Life
Is nourished by the ministry of love.
For love is ever with the soul and God
The fount of free communion, which is power,
Whereby the God in you is one with Him,
God thro' the whole infinitude of worlds.
Ye loved not, life was faint ; ye love, it rains.

A Man.

Master, the courses of the world are changed
As if the Eternal turned about in sleep,
And this our life was changed that is His dream.
At length hath ceased that immemorial strife
Whereby distrust and envy racked the heart,
Whereby the lips of women became hard,

Whereby the voice of children had grown sharp,
Whereby upon the widow's brow was seared
The care of many morrows, and salt tears
Made bitter channels down the agéd cheek.
The poor man goeth singing, rich in love,
His task made easy by a light of soul ;
The rich man goeth silent, poor in heart,
Lowly and laden with a grace of gifts.
The fear hath faded from the beggar's eye,
The awe is charmed from the orphan step,
The feeble man is shamed no more by strength.
Lo ! all this hast thou done, but guide us yet,
For peace so young is frail, and evil fate
May overtake us yet.

The Prophet.

Nay, children, hear !
Behold the mother on her bed of pain
Dreams of her rosy offspring to be born ;
And as she dreams still ever 'neath her heart
The little feet are formed, the little hands
Fashioned to do God's worship in the world,—
So doth the soul of man bring forth his days,
And forms and builds the fabric of his fate.
Ay, as the mother communes with her child
And many a truth doth teach him ere his birth,
And many a web doth weave for all his life

By the pervading influence of her love,
So may the soul in faith have power to weave
The changing shadows on the glass of life.
Ay, if a man live pure and look to God
Always, and doubting nothing in his heart,
He shall be guided in his every step
And know the Truth and hold it and not stray.
Nor shall he meet with evil in his path,
A power shall go before him and prepare,
And pain shall be prevented. Have but faith,
For evil enters by the gate of doubt.

*(He passes into the city, the multitude following with
cries of thanksgiving.)*

Song of the Children returning.

The lark to the crystal seas of light
Sails up on the winds of glory,
And the quivering ways of his circling flight
Ring with his raptured story;
He is borne away to the bounds of bliss
To drink at the springs of splendour,
And Heaven's desire in a quickening kiss
Mingles with Earth's surrender;
And his soul is rapt where no times may run,
Thro' his faith and his joy and his love made one
With the Spring, the Sun!

O come! Come into the brightening hills
Where rhapsody so surprises,
That the spirit is caught to the heavenly rills
Where the River of Life arises.
For the Fount of Life is the Fount of praise,
And His speech is the soul's thanksgiving,
The song of glory and golden days,
And the rapture of holy living.
And faith and vision and love shall be
One with God in his ecstasy,
The stream with the Sea.

Shall our faith be bound by the bonds of thought
More strait than the birds' believing?
Shall the love of our soul be restrained by aught
But the limit of soul's conceiving?
Infinite as the encircling skies,
Over the ocean bending,
Fire of the spirit, delight of the eyes,
Ecstasy ever ascending—
Let it rouse the heart as the spring the sod,
Winged with music and fiery shod,
Our Truth and our God!

(They enter the city dancing. The scene closes.)

END OF PART I

PART II

SCENE VIII

MIDNIGHT. THE TEMPLE OF THE SEVEN SPHERES.

The upper platforms of the Temple stand out against the sky—steps lead down to the darkness below.

Beneath there is a view of the city, the desert, and the sea. On the summit is a colossal statue seated on an iron throne with the ring of Eternity in its hand, an altar with lights before it.

A Voice.

NIGHT, and the calm of the measureless skies,
Where the stars in infinite number
Lull the load of the aching eyes
To the crystal kingdom of slumber ;
For the driving stress of the fretful soul
Night in her wisdom assuages
With a timeless sleep and the large control
Of the eyes of the infinite ages.
Is it well with the night? Is the Truth in sight ?

Voices.

Have peace, O brother that criest !
For in calm we lie, as the starry sky.

First Voice.

Glory to God in the Highest !

The Queen (above).

O Lord my God, I thank 'Thee from my heart,
For Thou hast heard the crying of my soul
Thro' the lone wilderness of barren years.
And Thou hast made my wilderness to sing
With silver rain and flowers and laughing streams,
And thro' my soul the echoes of my youth
Come back in music with the hope of Heaven.
Even as he who looked upon the stars
Controlled, confounded by immensity,
With infinite oppression on his soul,
Starts sudden earthward at his child's caress,
And blesses the sweet littleness of life,—
So have I known the loneliness of thrones
Alone as all before the Infinite.
But faith hath stepped between me and the void,
And earth returns with spring and voice of birds,
And I can take my people to my heart.
O mine the leap of children to my breast,
Like song of larks to Heaven at fall of dew !
O mine the fellowship of Motherhood !
Shall I not catch that sweet autumnal smile,
'I too have been a Mother?' Ay, my crown,

Messenger.

O Queen, I stood on guard by Akron's gate
When there rode one as if unto the hills
Foaming, nor stayed until I rode him down
Asking his purpose in thy name. We fought;
I slew, and on his body found this writ.
They said 'tis Prince Amraphel to the Kings
Of Elam, but I brought it unto thee.

The Queen.

Thou hast done well, and for thy zeal this gem.
Tell thou no man in Erech, but return,
And double all the watchmen on the towers,
And let them watch the hills and bring me word.

*(Exit Messenger—the Queen kneels in silence. Enter
Amraphel below).*

Amraphel.

O Thou who 'neath the blatant sea of life
Art Silence, Thou the Darkness of no stars,
Thee, when impassioned by my yearning love
Or by the fire of mine impelling wrongs,
I seek, for strong communion with Thy strength.
Not as the slaves who, as unto a King,
Bear Thee their tribute, kneel and crave their boon,
But that Thou hold me still in Thy control,
E'en as man holds a little fevered child.

Ay, even as a sword my soul is plunged
Seething into the ocean of Thy peace ;
Thou dost confirm in patience its resolve,
In calm dost temper it. For who may know
Whether the truth be as the sages teach,
Or if the cringing of our fathers' fears
To twilight terrors 'mid their gloomy trees
Bred in us instinct that defies all thought?
But this I know by manhood more than grace,
When,—as 'twill be this night,—the thunder clangs
Till the strong world is palsied at the shock,
When the hills reel, and Heaven in fateful wrath
Rolls o'er the scouring winds one sheet of flame,—
That I have felt my soul at such a time
Witness against me that there is a God,
And, could my homage touch Him, not in fear,
Nay, but in strength to greater strength, in pride,
I could bow down to majesty so great.
Ay, for I feel that he who most is man
Feels in his heart most surely that strong awe,—
Whether by manhood nearer to the truth,
Or by strong instinct nearer to old times,—
Till in the calm that canopies the stars,
Till in the wrath that rocks the massy hills,
His soul enkindled as by Fire affined
Owns, manifest in mightier moods, his God.
Thus unto Thee, O Calm, I come this night ;—
Witness my resolution 'neath Thy skies !

That there be nought precipitate in my will,
No more than when by course of laws eterne
Star strikes with star, and there is fear thro' space.
For but a little while my hopes were crushed ;—
Whence came that mystic's power, that even I,—
Who ever in the mirror of mankind
Saw myself master,—heard and held my peace?
From Thee?—whose iron laws as balls of glass
Shatter the glittering systems Thou hast made?
From Thee—whose storms rain bolts and bane of fire
Upon the just and the unjust? Shall he prove,—
A blind old mage unpractised in men's moods,—
Sufficient even in these barren days
To make the dream, that all have dreamed, come
true?
To make the man grow even as the maid,
Put off the beast, his passions and his fears,
And put on grace and immortality?
They dream! They dream! I stand upon life's
fact,
My destiny, devotion, and design ;
And tho' I stand alone before the world,
Yet strength, alone, is stronger, and I stand
Founded in resolution like an oak
Rock-rooted, fronting storms. Beware my foes!
For they have dreamed to rob me of my right,—
And shall I brook their malice? Shall I fall?
Rather confound the balance of the stars,

And sweep the whole creation from its course !
So now behold at length my sword is out,
My trumpets startle the distracted skies,
And I have called the quarters of the earth
To overwhelm mine enemies. For lo !
The hills of Elam shall be thick with spears,
The wilderness shall bristle into pikes,
While unto chariots shall the winds be chained,
And all the clouds rain arrows. And my wrongs
Shall be as engines in the hands of fate.
Ay, as the pillar that o'er ships at sea
Shadows the sudden menace of their doom,
When the vast whirlwind catches to the clouds
Columned destruction,—so I stand in might,
Nor shall mine anger slumber unappeased.
But I will stablish for myself a place
Unto all time a terror, till my deeds
Shall cast their shadows on the days to come.
My name shall gird great cities as with steel,
And men shall fear the dwellers in my seat ;
And pyramid and rock unto the end
Shall frown my features, where dark tribes shall
come
To pray and fall before my majesty.
And when the twilight falls upon our race,
My form shall loom terrific thro' the shades,
And men shall hold me for a primal god,
A sombre power that speaks in thunder yet.

And they shall call upon me in their plagues
With fasting priests and teachers of old lore
And blood of bullocks ! Thus I choose my course,
And thank the Fount of Power or be it flesh,
Or be it more than flesh, that gave me strength
To keep it ! Ay, behold I move this night.

(He ascends. Clouds gather over the desert, the wind rises.)

A Voice.

Wind ! and a sound as of rain is gone forth
And an ominous rumour of thunder ;
And a shadow of cloud in the ports of the north
And a flash that rends it asunder.
And over the spirit a darkness is cast,
As often in years without number
When the angel of pestilence lowering passed
As a fate, and men sobbed in their slumber.
Hath the heart release ? It is well with you ?

Voices.

Peace !

For we cherish the solace God gave us.
For in quiet we sleep, we may waken to weep.

First Voice.

Dream on ! For His mercy shall save us !

Amraphel.

(approaching the Queen and touching the crown on the altar).

O Queen, but one moon past I dreamed a dream,
And thou didst set this ring upon my head,
And glory shone about us ; but this night
It seemed we both did grapple for its gold,
And in the place of glory there was death.

The Queen.

Wouldst thou usurp the sorrows of thy Queen?
God gave them unto me, to me alone.
And if awhile I lay them at His feet,
Still are they mine ; their emblem is this round,
And on my brow they rest eternally.

Amraphel.

Not for thy crown I thirst, my Queen, but thee ;
Shall not eternal longing make thee mine?
For men may choose and match them flame to flame,
Our vasty zone doth hold us two alone,
And knows but thy great beauty and my love.
My love—O Beltis, 'tis a blinding sun
That lights my heaven with glory, as a sun
Hurls me terrific thro' the startled space,
Like a fell planet sundered from its star
For the destruction of the balanced worlds !

Ay, as a comet thro' the trackless night
Urged blindly, I am driven unto deeds
Not of myself, but of th' impelling fate
Driving for bane the strength that is mine own.
Dost thou not stand alone in all this night?
Or who is with thee in thy lonely watch
Where thou dost rule the courses of the world?
O Beltis, feel'st thou not the loneliness,
The terror of the void forlorn of hope
That circles thee, and the unplumbed abyss?
Thou standest high in sight of all the world,
Thou reelest, its derision stuns thy sense;
A paling lip is warrant to thy foes,
A quailing hand is mortal to thy peace,
One step aside, and ruin wraps thee round.
Where many a man hath fallen, canst thou stand,
Alone, alone, a woman?

The Queen.

Thinkest thou
I have no nights to measure out my pain?
Must I recall the darkness of the years?
No, for at length the morning is at hand,
And Heaven and Earth are nearer than I knew.
No, I am more a mother than a Queen.

Amraphel.

Once thou didst love me! Once didst hold my hand!

The Queen.

Never ! and yet I pardon thy mistake.
Man cannot know how lonely woman feels,
Nor guess how oft when others lend her strength
She takes release from loneliness for love.
But never dream I flattered thee so far,
My soul did scorn thee as it scorns thee now.
Now thou dost bring barbarians on my throne.
For there hath come a message e'en this hour,—
Thy messenger was taken by my guards,—
And all thy perjured heart is known to me.
For thee, O traitor, I am still the Queen.
Without, my guards are ready for thy death,
And wherefore, wherefore, traitor, should I spare ?
Dost thou remember when the city rose
And all the council trembled for my throne,
I set their leader's head upon my gates,
And by outdaring daring overcame ?
That mood is with me now, and now I spare ;
A woman triumphs in audacity.
And I would have thee learn how far is fear,
For we have the Eternal for our friend,
And I would have thee learn how strong we stand.
Then tremble thou at mercy ! Go in peace.

Amraphel.

Beltis, I go. But hear my words, O Queen !

Thine is a God of Mercy, and the veils
Of His fair temple are as frail as sleep ;
And thou shalt see them vanish as a dream,
That holds awhile entranced the human heart.
Mine is a God of Terror, and I build
His ruthless altar on the primal rock,
Where thro' all ages in His name hath run
The blood of all the sufferings of the world,
Whereon the lion hath struck down the kid,
Whereon the snake hath waited for the bird,
Where men have battled since the world began.
Who is the stronger? Let the issue prove !

*(Exit Amraphel. The Queen kneels in silence. Thunder
—the storm breaks, the whole sky is black.)*

A Voice.

Storm ! on the rampart of shuddering peaks
The imperious thunder is pealing,
And the echoing earth is aroused, and speaks
As a god in his wrathful revealing.
And over the soul a gathering gloom
Moves down to awake lamentation,
For the imminent doom of a world is in womb
And one day shall bring forth desolation !
The flood of fate on our way grows great ;
Awaken, brothers ! awaken !
For behold ye sleep and the waves run deep !

Voices.

O rejected of God and forsaken !

(Tumult of voices. Enter below many dreamers in fear.)

A Voice.

Behold, I saw a vision of great kings,
The Kings of Shinar, Sippar, and of Ur,
Of Erech, Elam, and of Babilu,
Who marched in solemn rank around the gates,
And last of all came Beltis, and they wept.

Another.

To me appeared a glory of great stars,
Procyon, Vega, Alghul, and Altair,
Arcturus, Rigel, and Aldebaran ;
And where they went was tempest and dark cloud,
And voice of lamentation as they passed.

Another.

To me there came a vision of the Twins,
Tigris and broad Euphrates, and they ran
Blood-red, and in the waters struggling men
Shouting, and all the Heaven rained with blood.

Another.

To me arose old Nimrod, son of Cush,
As tho' a lion had rent him in the chase,
Wounded and leaning on a broken spear.

Another.

But I beheld the Prophet on the height
Weaving a splendid garment for the Lord,
And all the glory of the world was there
The pride of hills and burden-bearing streams,
And a great host upheld it and rejoiced.
But there arose a storm out of the East,
And rent it howling, and behold the woof
Was but a gossamer o'er the gulfs of life.
*(They look on one another in fear. Thunder and
rain continued.)*

THE SCENE CLOSES.

INTERLUDE

Strophe.

Is it shepherdless, threading the maze
Of the moors as a wandering sheep,
That the spirit of man thro' the infinite strays
O'er bewildering ways in sleep,—
Enticed by a brightening blade,
Allured by a golden thought,
Thro' the wood or the wilderness driven or stayed,
Thro' the sun or the shade unsought ;

Started by dark dead fears,
Eluded by loves that last,
And hopes, the frail buds that were broken by tears
In the windy years of the past?

Antistrophe.

Or is it that over the wide
Wan waste of the infinite sea
Our spirits go rudderless on with a tide
Prophetic of things to be ;
Not setting a certain course,
But borne on the fateful flow
That ever sets from some Infinite Source
By laws that we may not know?
Is it then that the urging streams
In whom is our life's control
Are clear, by the drift of the wakening dreams
In the dawning gleams of the soul?

Strophe.

O Life! on thy cliffs in vain
We break, as the seas upcast,
Hurled on heights we can never attain,
Shut in by the bar of the past.
Faith comes, but when we have slept,
We are shaken by old regrets,
Hopes outwatched and desires outwept
And fears that our faith forgets.

O love, forgotten of time !
O faith, unbaffled and free !
Winged with thee we would cleave and climb
Unto Eternity !

Antistrophe.

Peace ! For ye speak in your pain
Wildly, not weighing your speech ;
Let us whisper the tale of our gladness again
Silently, each unto each.
Let us build a girdle of towers,
For faith, as in love upwrought,
Of the gathering grace of aspiring hours
And the habit of holy thought.
And a glittering garland of birds
Shall eddy from spire to spire,—
Bright speech of the soul that is winged without
words
On the strength of a single desire.

Epode.

Until thro' the crystal maze
Of sleep, the shadow of Life,
Shall glance the summer of golden days
With the echo of praise, not strife ;

And the fount of our dreams shall be
For the quickening of the soul,
And the baffling skies of Eternity
Bright as the starry scroll.
And in sleep the wandering feet
With the sandals of Truth be shod,
Till in shadowy meads they may move and meet
With the shadowless glory of God.

SCENE IX

*A LARGE OPEN PLACE WITHIN THE GATE
OF ERECH.*

AS IN SCENE III.

The scene is decorated as for a festival. It is evening.

The Queen is seated on the Throne of Judgment with her guards and her court about her.

The Prophet sits on a golden throne set on the steps of the Temple between the great Cherubim.

The people with flowers throng the Square, standing and sitting on the steps of the Palace and the Temple.

Enter Hasisadra. He approaches the throne and addresses the Queen defiantly.

Hasisadra.

How long then shall the Gods abide in peace
That thus the hearts of men are turned away?
Is it a small thing that their altars teem
With blood and incense at the appointed hours,
But nevermore is offering of bent brow
Nor fearful worship of extended palm?
Who is this stranger that usurps my place?
Are his gods potent that they thus contend
With the great Triad and the planets seven?
Wilt thou not rather give command, O Queen,

And crush him with the mace of majesty,
Lest thou provoke the gods thy fathers feared
To shatter thee with thunder ?

The Queen.

Many years

We have been lost in darkness and blind ways,
Nor did the Sun give light unto our steps,
Nor did the Moon direct us, nor the stars
Lead us unto the waters of our thirst.
Nor do we seek the witness of old lore,
Nor in the doubtful twilight of the times,
But in the testimony of the soul.
For in the shifting tides that sway the mind
Full many a ship goes down while it is dark,
But in the soul is that authentic light,
That instinct unto hope that cannot die,
That witness unto purity and praise
And love and loveliness, that changes not,
Or call it faith, grace, wisdom—it is God.
For ye have told us many a doubtful tale,
Which by much hearing many have believed,
But when this stranger came and whispered 'Love,'
The God within our hearts cried out to us,
A surer witness of a surer truth
That shall be for all peoples and all times,
Go ye and seek another tale as true,
And we will hear it.

Hasisadra.

Then beware, O Queen !

For nightly scanning the prophetic skies
I read the approaching signal of your fate.
And tho' ye dream to stablish a new law,
To strive with all the spirits of the past,
I tell thee, even as the starry scroll
Is wrapt about the world inevitably,
E'en so the past is coiled about man's heart.
And tho' the sunlight may efface the stars,
Tho' dreams awhile may veil the facts of life,
Yet rather may this earth from its old course
Swerve, than the human heart from custom's chain,
From ways of thought made easy by long wont,
Haunted by powers in each remembered scene,
Hallowed by shades of each returning hour ;—
I tell thee, Queen, a God is in the past,
And whoso strives with him shall strive with fate.

The Queen.

Thinkest thou then, who delvest 'mong the dead,
No power dwells with the future? Every hope
And every upward longing of the heart
Are as the angels of the Truth to be.
As for the thunders of thy powers of night,
This is our royal answer to thy threats.
Thy gods, thy stars, thy planets we reject,

Their altars desecrate, their faith deny ;
And from this throne of Erech, give decree,
That thro' all kingdoms where our name hath sway
Their idols all be broken and their shrines.
For love alone shall be our light, our God,
And by the power of love my realm shall stand
Unconquerable to Eternity !
With all our hearts united in one dream,
And every soul astretch towards one faith,
And every will made one in one strong hope
Shall we not call on thunder? To thy dead !
Here is the Truth ! Here is the living God !

Hasisadra.

The curse is fallen, Queen ! Thy realm is doomed.
Thy power is taken from thee. He is blest,
Whose hand shall bring thee to thy destined fate.

*(Exit. A thrill of superstitious fear passes through the
multitude.)*

The Queen.

And shall we fear his malice ? Let him go !
Our shield is purity, our sword is faith,
Our banner is the standard of God's Truth.

*(The people are reassured. There is a murmur, then a
deep silence. The twilight is falling, and the
Prophet teaches.)*

The Prophet.

Children, the day is spent, the night draws nigh,
And earthwards as the light grows dim and faint
Shines out the loftier splendour of the skies,
As peak on peak turns eastward to the night,
As rolls the shadow westward o'er the world.
Now mages patient on their towers look forth
And scan the writ prophetic of the stars,
As o'er the transient glories of this earth
Darkness reveals the enfolding Infinite.
So runs it thro' the little day of life ;
Childhood thro' joy of rosy dawn retains
Some sense of wider knowledge soon dispelled,
Age in its evening quiet turns once more
Eastwards unto the mystery folding all.
So I, by just a little hour of time
Stand, in the doubtful measure of mankind,
Nearer unto that darkness we call death.
How shall I read the scripture of its skies ?
For as a wanderer on a far lone peak
'Twixt the engirdling glacier and the stars,
So standeth every man before his death.
The more he looketh down upon the world,
The more he looketh up unto the stars,
The darker are his steps, farther his hope,
More lonely, chill, and silent is his place.
But I, who stand in twilight, and life's day

Fadeth away from me, I eastward gaze
Unto that night which no man may unseal,
A sentinel towards Eternity ;
And thus I cry my Truth, as on the heights
Men cry the hourly rising of the stars,
That this the night which no man may reveal
Is no night, but the breaking of God's day.
And first of all I hail across the dark
One Law, Eternal, Universal,—God,
Infinite Force impelling and unchanged,
Infinite Mind conceiving all these worlds
Perfect in self-adjustment to its ends.
And next to this I worship and I hail
One Course, one Will, one Progress manifest ;—
From the first womb of waste chaotic flame,
To whirling clusters of vast meteorites
And the fair dance of planets round their sun ;
From the loud turmoil of volcanic storm,
Thro' vaporous twilight of engirdling cloud,
To crystal changefulness of ambient air ;
From life unconscious surging to the light
In primal forests of luxuriant gloom,
To life of beast grown conscious in the flesh
And in the breadth and brightness of the fields,
To life of man of conscious mind and soul
To read the splendour of the thoughts of God.
Is then this progress that we make in Him,
Since God is Life and Law and Progress all,

From less to greater consciousness of life,
For nought? The God within us answers, Nay!
For Life is God for ever urging on
In us unto that Term, that Perfect Praise,
Who dwelling in the Eternal, out of time,
Is the Beginning even as the End.
And thus thro' all th' infinite worlds of space
And infinite hosts of strange infinitudes,
God in all life draws nearer to Himself,
And evermore hath knowledge of Himself,
By which alone Perfection hath its praise.
Then, tho' this earth may pass unto its term,
Tho' every star in all this night shall pass,
Our praise so far from perfect in this life
Our light of Truth so fitful and so faint,
Self-knowledge so obscure shall it be all?
Is this the purpose? Or shall God be mocked?
Rather, divine in essence and in truth,
We shall arise with ever-widening wings,
Till in our passage thro' the infinite worlds
Ours is the absolute knowledge of that Self,
Eternal in all being, God in us,
Which is the last perfection of all praise.
But in this progress we accept of need
Collision and eruption, strife and pain,
Made sacred by their purpose, that they bring
New lights, new powers, new attributes of God.
Then let no man or any vessel of life

Murmur that he be singled from his kind
By the misery of his lot. For by his pain
Is born a fuller consciousness of life,
Some growth of soul 'tis ours in time to know.
For if the beast that bears a life of pain
Perishes in his sorrow, is no more,
The God in us that bids us to be just,
Betrays His own first precept—is no God.
Doth then the captive songster in his cage,
Blinded by ignorant barbarity,
Reft from the quivering rapture of his wings,
Shut from the splendour that inspired his praise,
From the joy of love and living,—doth he cry
Cursing the life he sought not,—one long woe,—
'Where, where is justice?' to deny his God?
Nay, but his hymn rings daily to the morn,
And to the eve goes up his song of praise,
For to our simple sisters in their pain
There is a light we know not, and a faith,
And witness inarticulate of grace.
For, even as eruptions are of law
And not of chance, so too a spiritual course
Brings pain upon the spirit in due time,
The fruit of some maturity of soul,
And as essential to some spiritual stage,
Even as unto a woman great with child.
Ay, 'tis the certain action of some law
Tending towards that all-essential Truth

That consecrates the woe of all the world.
Thus when we suffer still we strive with God
Incarnate thro' the infinite worlds of life,
And ever move with Him unto His Truth.
How shall ye move with Him unless ye strive?
How shall ye feel His fire unless ye burn?
How shall ye see His light unless ye gaze?
How shall ye hold His hand unless ye love?
How shall ye love unless ye suffer? Love,
Love, and again I say unto you Love.
Love all, for there is nothing God hath made
Wherein He dwelleth not and suffereth not.
Nor shall His striving and His suffering cease
Till Truth, till God essential in all Life
Be One in God by perfect Love at last.

The Queen.

Lord, what of this great Truth? Where doth it
dwell?
In lore hast sought it, or in visions seen?

The Prophet.

I stood within the glory of the Lord,
Where space is not, nor after nor before,
He only, and the sum of all His praise.

(The people listen entranced.)

And there, there are no shadows and no veils,
Only the perfect vision of the soul,
There, where the senses are not,—where is God.
So saw I in the glory of His works,
The Perfect Thought, begotten ere all time,
In Perfect Manhood fashioned and defined,
The Pattern and the Symbol of all praise,
Wherein Eternity regards Itself
Glassed in the pure perfection of all Truth.
Then knew I all the purpose of the Lord
Thro' the great sea of spheres that is His dream ;
The power of all the secrets of the world
Consorted with my soul, and sympathy
From the Eternal folded me about,
Till all the sounding thunders roared one word
To the vast whirlwinds seething in great depths,
And ocean rolling out the primal chord,
The eldest of creation that hath song,
Swung out one hope, one glory for his theme.
For Life in all things is the Thought of God
Passing from the Perception to the Term,
From Being universal thro' all space
Animate and essential with all life,
Unto the boundless Consciousness of Self,
Which is the sole perfection of all praise.
Even as Perfect Manhood is in Him,
So is the Perfect Thought of God in man,
The Thought creative of the teeming worlds,

Who is the Mystery and the Truth of Life,
Who shall be crowned the Son of God, the End.

(It is night. In the sky above appears a comet. The people stand entranced gazing upon the Prophet.)

Semi-chorus.

Behold the Prophet stands as tho' inspired
With all his face transfigured by strange fire,
As tho' some Glory burned within his night.

Semi-chorus.

The people stand entranced beneath his spell,
Like dreamers when in rapt prophetic sleep
They are confronted with eternity.

Semi-chorus.

There is a mighty Presence in our midst,
Unearthly, robed in silence and great awe,
With all the future in its ample palm.

Semi-chorus.

Look up! O God! upon the quivering skies
Hung o'er the city like a blood-red sword,
A sign of fire portentous! Is it fate?

(Movement of consternation among the people.)

Semi-chorus.

A comet! In what majesty it burns!

Semi-chorus.

Reflected in men's faces in what fear !

Semi-chorus.

One word to thrill our spirits with new hope !

Semi-chorus.

One cry to break the intolerable still !

A Voice.

Awake ! Awake ! Destruction is at hand !
Behold your ruin swelleth in the East !
Elam is risen, Ob and Armadon,
Never was such an onslaught in all time.
Naked ye stand before barbarian steel,
And yet ye dream nor heed the floods of fate !
Awake ! Awake ! Your ruin is at hand !

(A movement of fear passes thro' the people.)

Chorus.

As when the hills in throes convulsive heave,
There goes a muffled rumour thro' the ground
Swelling with clamorous dread and rolling din,
Thunder on thunder, till with giant pangs
The strong earth sudden shudders to its depths,
And towers totter and stout bulwarks reel,

And cities waken, and the midnight rings
With crash of masonry and cries of men,
Gaunt death and loud destruction,—so there swells
An ominous thunder thro' the multitude,
And hearts are shaken with a fear profound,
And the bright temple of our life of dreams
Rocks, and fair faiths are shattered ! God of War !
In mercy shield us from the days of wrath !

*(Tumult. Enter priests running and crying with
images and torches.)*

Chorus.

See from the Temple comes a ghastly train !
Priests—with the lying gods our fathers feared,
Istar and Shamesh, Nebo, and Merodach,
Mylitta, Nisroch the ill-famed, and Bel !
Full fifty priests with torches run before,
Rending their meagre limbs with frenzied steel,
And fifty priests with torches run behind,
Crying, and hearts are shaken to the depth !

(Tumult.)

Priests.

Woe ! woe ! unto the false and stubborn heart !
Repent ye, for destruction is at hand !
The gods sent pestilence, ye heeded not,
The gods sent famine, and ye bowed not down,
And lo ! your doom is written in the stars !
Your Queen is turned from your fathers' gods,

She heedeth not the planets in her pride,
And they shall lay her glory in the dust
When all her pomp and beauty are brought low
And owls do dwell in Erech! Woe! ay, woe!

Semi-chorus.

See, how men waver as the gods go by!
For some men start as at an old deep dread
Forgotten that did sway their hearts of yore,
And some men kneel, and some men leap and cry
And follow, more corrupting!

*(There is a gradual movement in the crowd, then a rush
after the priests.)*

Semi-chorus.

As a stone,
Loosened by rains on some dim towering crag,
Falls, and still gathering fury as it goes,
O'er poising rock and boulder plunging, bears
Down on men sleeping the o'erwhelming doom,
The whole vast horror of the avalanche,
So more and more they run and leap and cry
Till madness riots in the tracks of fear,
And ever are men shaken, ever borne
On by the rush of frenzied terror!

Semi-chorus.

See!

The Queen in bitterness with brow of stone
Makes with her sceptre the old sign of doom,

And a young captain leaps with naked brand,
And sudden as a cyclone on the seas
Bursts on devoted ships with fire and fate
And hurls them to perdition,—so he sweeps
With his young men impetuous on their wiles,
Smites, havocs, slays, and shatters !

(Fighting ; a great tumult and confusion.)

Semi-chorus.

And the god
Merodach totters with his golden spear,
And Nisroch triple, with the ring of time
Crashes in fiery shivers ! God of War,
Defend us from the ruin of their wrath !

The Prophet.

Peace, peace ! For they have chosen. Let them go !
Hath God no swords of fire that thou must strike ?

(Fighting ceases ; the young disciples return.)

The Queen.

Lo ! it is finished ! Have I known thee, Peace ?
By violence the reign of God shall fall ;
On me, O Lord, this blood ! On me alone !

Priests.

Woe ! Woe ! Unto the mighty and the proud
Howl ! for your doom is nigh ! The vultures come,

And Erech shall be made a place of bones,
The haunt of jackals and of harbouring snakes.
The gods grow weary of you ; they shall smile,
And put away your troublings from their sight.
Woe ! Woe to Erech ! Howl ! a place of bones !
(Exeunt priests and people.)

Chorus.

They have caught up their ruins. They are fled,
And all the faithless folk have followed them.
We are left lonely, face to face with fate.
(A pause.)

A Disciple.

Master, what writest thou upon the sand ?

The Prophet.

The years unto the Kingdom ;—till the Truth
Be stablished on the earth unto all time.
Said I not unto thee,—I come like rains
That minister in music and expire ?
But He shall come at last in His own time
To sow the seeds of fire within man's heart,
Nor shall His light for evermore be quenched.
I do but call man's witness unto Him,
Now but a little and my tale is told.

Disciple.

But what of those who led these to their fall?

The Prophet.

There is a secret place in every soul,
Tho' dark, tho' unsuspected, which enshrines
All sacrifice, all purity, all love.
God will reveal it in His own good time,
If not in this world, surely in the next.

The Queen (rising).

Sound ye my trumpets ! For the Truth shall stand
A banner for the muster of the stars,
Where all the Sons of God from all the Heavens
In stormy speed shall lighten to our aid !
Ay, in their blinding squadron's windy might
They shall confirm our frontiers as with fire,
And swords of flame shall certify our gates !
Lo ! I have sent to Accad and to Ur
To meet me with a force from all my realm
To overwhelm this fear that hath arisen ;
But faith is ever sudden, swift and sure,
Too long they tarry ; I will march to-night,
And we will prove, despite the frowns of Fate,
Truth towers above the bluster of the surge.
What tho' the breakers mantle in the gloom,
Move on immense, precipitate, and clash

Shattered and seething from their sundering shock?
They founder in confusion. We are firm.
Steadfast and stately we direct the deep,
And point the even port to labouring sails.
For ours is that clear light that wasteth not,
Station of prayer that knoweth not surprise;—
How should we fear what violence can do
When we have Truth and virtue—God's own shield?
Sound ye my trumpets! I will march to-night!

(Trumpets. Then enter many soldiers in haste.)

Chorus.

The trumpets echo thro' the startled streets,
And all the ways are thronged with mustering men,
And bristling with bright banners, serried spears,
And chariot lines encumber the broad gates.
The night is wild with voices, clang of arms,
And tramp of armoured men and neigh of steeds,
And wail of women clinging to men's breasts.
And everywhere the Queen with kindling word,
And voice that cleaves the tumult keen as steel,
Exhorts, commands, and fires with strength and hope,
Until confusion dwindles into calm
And order marshals all unto her sway.
Ay, as when over the low flats of sand
Stretching in league-long silence 'neath the stars
There comes a cry from the returning sea,
And the tide sweeps thro' channels drear and dry,

And cross-waves whirl and eddy in the pools,
And clash and buffet in the narrow straits,
Wrangling and spouting starwards, till in time
Sweep on the deeper rollers rank on rank,
Till over all with measured music moves
The ordered march of the majestic sea.
So will she forth this night. O God of Grace,
Shield and direct her for Thy Glory's sake!

THE SCENE CLOSES.

INTERLUDE

Semi-chorus.

A tempest swelleth thro' the blinding night
Over the boundless ocean of our fate;
The stars are blotted from our groping sight,
The waves wax great;—

Semi-chorus.

The old lights that have led us all these years
Are darkened, the old gods go down in wrath,
They haunt the shades of our familiar fears
That brought them forth;—

Semi-chorus.

O if there be not power enough to save
In this our hunger for a fuller life,
Then is our hope but an insatiate wave
With wind at strife !

Semi-chorus.

O if there be no faith inviolate
Beyond this yearning for Eternity,
We are but flotsam on the tides of Fate,
Death's mockery !

Strophe.

Over the waste that is blind of light
We drift on a boundless sea,
We are bound about by the Infinite,
We are girt with Eternity ;
And we pass to a port where we see no light,
And out of the night are we !

Antistrophe.

We faint on the weary waste forlorn,
We fail in the gloom intense,
And we gaze around on the blinding bourn,
And we wonder whither and whence ;
And our hearts cry out for the star of morn,
For a sign to our darkling sense.

Strophe.

It may be there are those who in years of praise
Thro' grace at the last grow wise,

It may be that the light of the heavenly ways
Is not for our earthly eyes,
It may be that the glooms about us blaze
With the splendour of northern skies.

Antistrophe.

But over the pitiless waste afar
We are swept by the winds of fear,
And the storm effaces the far faint star
You gave for a sign to steer ;
And we turn to the past where the old lights are,
May be they were false, but near.

Strophe.

They told us tales of the gods who came
And dwelt on the Earth of old,
They gave us a human heart to claim,
And a human hand to hold ;—
O give us a story, give us a name,
Or a carven image of gold !

Antistrophe.

For the way of thought is a slippery way,
And the ways of the soul are wide ;
And a man 'neath the peaceful skies may stray,
But must in the storm confide ;—
O give us a shelter, give us a stay !
O give us a guide !

SCENE X

BEFORE THE GATES OF ERECH TOWARDS THE EAST.

Night. The towers above the gate and the city walls, and the roofs and windows of the houses overlooking the walls, are thronged with people anxiously waiting news of the Queen.

*Watchmen and guards stand by the gate.
A horseman approaches in haste.*

The People.

Ho! Com'st thou from the East? What news?
What news?

Messenger.

Five days I fast, save for some chance-found fruit;
Hear and in pity feed me, for I faint.
I left the host not far from Akron's gate,
Where the Queen fought with Elam five days past;
Fought from dim dawn to dusk, and overcame
In such a battle as was never dreamed.
For as we marched in twilight o'er the hills,
With song exultant and great hope at heart,
Sudden we faced the sunrise o'er a ridge,

And there before us on the opposing slope
Stood the wild nations ready, and between
Gloomed a bleak lonely valley brimmed with mist.
Best had we waited, steadfast on the slope,
Ay, for the foe were many, we were few,
But so the Queen had stirred she could not stay ;
And sudden with one cry from all the host,
As tho' the sluices of our souls had burst,
We plunged into the twilight of that vale.
And with one cry united in one rage,
Fired by their lust of blood and long revenge,
Swept down the nations from the opposing heights.
Ay, as when two vast breakers surging meet,
The sundered champions of one ocean brood,
Twin tidal monsters, by one force of tides
Meet for destruction in the narrow seas,
And blind with staggering crest and smoking mane
Rage, roar, rush, reel, clash, and with showering
 spume
Spout to the stars and shatter,—so in rage
Precipitate o'er the headlong slopes amain
Shock unto shock the battles clashed and closed
In one mad wreck and ruin ! How we fought
Inextricably mingled friend and foe !
We slew, we struck till arms could strike no more.
But in the eve our trumpets rang again,
And round the banner staggering drew a tithe
Of the great host that gloried so that morn.



declare the star-writ will of Heaven
to the purpose of the Queen,
men's hearts divide and they are stayed.
To fail to shield them, she hath sent
folk of Hara to your gates,
you thus receive and hold them safe.

(Enters the city.)

Watchman.

Other horseman on the plain
never yet glad tidings rode!

The People.

You from the Queen? What news? What
?

Messenger.

And heavy, fraught with pain and fear—
He returns to Erech, now, this night,
Wounded, alone, and wounded unto death.

(A great cry of misery.)

Chorus.

Darkness, now our light is taken away!
Silence, now our song of praise is still!
We lose her strength. Say on, what is thy tale?

And so the carnage ceased ; the foe were slain
Or scattered hopeless on the barren hills,
And there as drunken men among the dead
We reeled and fell and slept. But in the morn
The great Queen sent me forth with other three
To bear the news to you by separate roads.
And I have come scarce knowing of my steps ;
O feed me of your pity, for I faint.

(Enters the city.)

Watchman.

Behold another horseman on the road !

The People.

Ho ! Art thou from the Queen ? What news ?
What news ?

Messenger.

Beltis the Queen hath sent me unto you,
That ye make ready houses to receive
Women and sick and children and old men
From Hara, lest they die by ruthless hands.
The Queen doth hold the passes of the hills
With but a few, nor is she reinforced,
Tho' every hour may bring the expected aid.
For Hasisadra sent to all his priests
To oppose the levy that the Queen would make
Thro' all her cities in this fear of war.

And they declare the star-writ will of Heaven
Is hostile to the purpose of the Queen,
So that men's hearts divide and they are stayed.
And lest she fail to shield them, she hath sent
The feeble folk of Hara to your gates,
And bids you thus receive and hold them safe.

(Enters the city.)

Watchman.

Behold another horseman on the plain
Riding as never yet glad tidings rode !

The People.

Comest thou from the Queen ? What news ? What
news ?

Messenger.

Ill news and heavy, fraught with pain and fear—
The Queen returns to Erech, now, this night,
Vanquished, alone, and wounded unto death.

(A great cry of misery.)

Chorus.

O Darkness, now our light is taken away !
O Silence, now our song of praise is still !
God give her strength. Say on, what is thy tale ?

Messenger.

Lo! the Queen held a pass between dark hills,
Even the gates of Shinar towards the East,
And steadfast kept her little band of spears
Against unnumbered hordes from dawn to dusk.
And wave on wave they swept upon her still,
And wave on wave broken she hurled them
back,
Till o'er the valley lay a wall of dead.
But, as the breakers beat upon a wall
Loosing its battered barrier stone by stone,
So obdurate as ocean wave on wave
The ranks of ruin rolled from dawn to eve,
And evermore our dwindling lines grew faint.
Hard pressed we stood, but quickened by her
voice
And looking to each hour to bring us aid
We held the valley till the day was spent.
Then, at the sunset, sudden in our rear
Rang shouts and trumpets of a mighty host,
And there shone out all fiery in the glow
The bannerets of Erech. And we wept;
And the impetuous onset paused awhile.
O hope, how bright it flashed, how swift it fell!
It was Amraphel; with a traitor's sword
He barred the opening valley in our rear,
And sent a traitor's message to the Queen,

Offering his sword if she would grant his suit,
Offering to save her from her instant doom.

(A cry of rage and astonishment.)

But the Queen turned her chariot. As a star
Plunges terrific thro' the fields of night
Strown with the glittering shoals of meteorites
And clashing blindly thro' their sundered lines
Strews all her tracks of night with scattering fire,
So the Queen drove full at Amraphel's host,
And the whole battle staggering held its breath
To see the glorious passage of the Queen,
As with one blast of trumpets, one great cry,
And all the tattered remnant of her force,
Charging she smote and shattered, till her way
Was strown with splintered spears and wrecks of men.

(A rising murmur.)

Never was joy so fiery in man's heart,
As on we drove in that despairing rush
Thro' rank on rank of steel, thro' death on death,
Till thro' their rear and far across the plain,
Beyond the shouting and the clash of strife,
We cleft unto the silence and the night,
Then, when the joy was over in the still
We knew the Queen sore wounded by a spear,
The force to save the city but a wreck,
And all the passes open to the foe.
Amraphel might have turned and ended them,
But he forbore, we know not why he stayed,

For all the East is open to his hand.
And thus this night your Queen returns to you
Vanquished, alone, and wounded unto death.

(Tumult.)

Chorus.

We have awakened, and our dream is done.
O! we are broken on the wheel of Fate!
Behold our gladness all is taken away!

*(Messenger enters the city—the sound of voices swells like the
sea—the gates are closed and the lights extinguished.)*

INTERLUDE

Chorus

*(huddled together in the darkness, and shaken with fear
and misery).*

On the pitiless cliffs of the islet Time
Man in impetuous strife must climb,
Cast up in the night on a desolate shore
That is doomed unto darkness for evermore,
With below the sea where no storms abate,
And above the inscrutable frown of Fate.

'Mid night and thunder and girdling cloud
Wind and the clamour of waters loud,
Fate on the heights of Time doth sit,
And tries man's vision and darkens it,
And metes with his measure the ages' range,
And clangs with his hammer the peals of change.

Semi-chorus.

And man looks up to the heights above,
And is mocked by the shadows of life and love,
Strives and climbs with a bursting heart
On paths whence never the clouds depart,
Bearing his burden, all alone
On the desolate ridges of slag and stone.

And the slopes he painfully climbs are wrought
Of the burdens of long dead hope and thought,
For these burdens are an eternal load
That is left to lie and to build the road,—
Slag, the waste of a quenchless fire,
And stone, that is barren to all desire.

Semi-chorus.

O burden of hope and despairing strife,
Lust of the eyes and desire of life!
O faith that baffles the grasp of pain,
And love that looks for a rest in vain!

Love that is mocked by one changeless fate
Too small to trust and to drowse too great !

And the sad days come and are plain to know,
For their tread is heavy, their gait is slow,
But the glad days come with averted face
That we know not till they are passed apace.
O hope that weeps for the skies o'ercast !
O joy that weeps in the past, the past !

Semi-chorus.

Are there not some who in passionate strife
Reject the load and the laws of life,
Despite the storm and the fiery bolt
In the desperate rush of a wild revolt
From the smothering grip of the stern decree ?
Sister, sister, what dost thou see ?

Semi-chorus (prophetically).

Horses plunging in headlong flight,
Plunging wild thro' the chasms of night !
Not a heart to warn, not a hand to stay—
God ! And this is the godless way !
Death is the end of it, death is the goal,
Death of the body and death of the soul !

Walls of granite, and towers of cloud,
Wind and thunder and waters loud,—

Full in the teeth of the blinding hail,
And the curb hath snapt, shall the will avail?
The steeds rush over the mountain face,
And plunge and plunge thro' the void of space!

Semi-chorus.

So they rush unto ruin without control,
The passionate steeds of the human soul,
In their peril of strength. Not a guiding star
On the desolate way where but shadows are;
On this ridge where a man may scarce take breath,
Hung over the shore of the shadow of death.

And the lonely folk on the slopes below
With burdens labouring sore and slow,
On the merciless ridges of slag and stone
By the fathomless gulfs of the sheer unknown,—
Do they not reel at the desolate height?
Do they not faint in the frown of night?

Semi-chorus.

To some is a peril of strong despair,
Or a peril of burdens hard to bear;
To all alike the relentless slope
Bereft of light and forlorn of hope;
To all the dread of the night's lone sea,
That calls them back to Eternity.

Semi-chorus.

But are there not those in the wild obscure
Who strive in their strength for a light more sure?
Are there not those who in fire of hope
Forsake the tracks of the rock-bound slope
And strive to lighten the ways of life?
Sister, sister, what of their strife?

Semi-chorus.

Years of travail and ceaseless toil,
And the surge of hope and the heart's recoil,
And the dizzying search of the blinding night,
And the days of scorn and the time's despite,
Till the cloud is rent and the peak seems near,—

Semi-chorus.

Sister, sister, what dost thou fear?

Semi-chorus (prophetically).

Hark! the terrible thunder peals!
The precipice rocks and the mountain reels,
And the storm rolls up thro' the threatening space,
And broods and breaks on the mountain face;
And down the shelterless slope amain
The avalanche sweeps and the blind moraine!

Semi-chorus.

So they fall whoever would deprecate
The iron rule of the tyrant Fate,
Who high on the peaks of Time doth sit
And tries man's vision and darkens it,
Who metes with his measure the ages' range,
And clangs with his hammer the dooms of change.

But these burdens—hope and despairing strife,
Lust of the eyes and desire of life,
And faith that baffles the grasp of pain,
And love—may never man rest again?
Can he not lighten the aching load?
Must he strive on the lampless road?

Semi-chorus.

Nay, let him chasten the stirring fire,
Renounce his light and his heart's desire,
Till his lust like leaves in his sight shall fall,
And the lust of life at the last of all,
And the surging strife in his soul shall cease,
And the end of it all be eternal peace.

Chorus.

Peace? We are waves on a desolate shore
Breaking and striving for evermore,

And the tides must flow and the tides must fall
Nor ever the nations rise at all.
Peace? 'Tis the moan of our mother the sea,
That gathers us back to Eternity.

*(There is an approaching sound of hoofs. The people
appear on the walls and at the windows. The gates
open in silence.*

*A chariot with a disordered band of horsemen gallops up
to the gate and passes within the city. There is a
great cry—and then a great silence.)*

THE SCENE CLOSES.

SCENE XI

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER IN THE PALACE.

On the left is an open terrace looking on to the open Square by the Gate. In the centre the Queen is lying upon a couch of carved ivory hung with cloth of gold, her women about her. Sunset lights seen in the sky above the terrace.

First Woman.

O BITTER Fate! Wounded to death she lies
Who was the soul of Erech. None beside
Can save us from this doom. O! none beside
Can fire with zeal this last unbroken host
Tardily mustered from divided lands,
That it may stay the onslaught of the tribes
Instant upon us with barbarian steel.

Second Woman.

Ay, if she leads us not, then are we lost,
But if she rises, surely she will die.

Third Woman.

She wakes. Grant, Heaven, that her mind be clear !

The Queen (raising herself on her couch).

Another day goes down. O God, have mercy !
O take to Thee the aspect most divine,
And on the measure of my barren days,
When misery had sown my heart with salt
And Hope refused her tears, think not, O Lord !
But look upon my sorrows, pause and weigh !
Are not my griefs enough to claim Thine ear ?
My people, O my children, for your weal
Have I not laboured all my lonely years ?
Have I not toiled and hoped for you and wept ?
Yet in my need ye leave me destitute.
For I have loved you, children ; for your sake
Foregone the natural ways of womanhood,
Lived lonely, wedded to one driving hope
That I might give you happiness and peace.
Ay, even as a woman in her pains
Fashions her offspring by her golden dreams
Prophetic of the little life to be,
So did I dream the joy that I might bear,
And lo ! I bring forth ruin and your fate.
Children, I blame you not ; it was my love
Blinded me to your weakness, for I dreamed

The Fire was in your heart as in my heart
That quickened all the winter of my years.
My faith in you was even as my love,
Quickening when Heaven was starless to my sight ;
Despite its faith in God the soul would starve
Unfostered by the larger faith in man.
And so I love you still, and still believe.
Yet, even as a wanderer in the waste,
Faint with long famine and a fire of thirst,
Dreams in the golden dawn that round him gleam
The pinnacles and spires of cities fair,
And leaps in rapture from his bed of sand,
Where he had lain in desperate hours to die,—
So have I started from my night of pain,
Have seen about my path the lights of God,
Have caught the voice of angels, but thro' all
Were not my dreams but children of my thirst,
Delusive fancies of expiring hope,
That mock the lost, the way-worn, and the lonely ?
Nay, every mother's dream towards her child,
And every hope arisen in the heart,
And every act of pity and pure love,
Nay, every slighted impulse unto praise
That sang since the beginning of the world,—
Doth bear me witness that I strove for Truth.
And this shall be my praise in sight of God,
And this shall be my comfort to the end.

(Enter Officer.)

Officer.

O Queen, a messenger out of the East
Gasp that Amida's streets are full of blood ;
For the barbarians burst upon the town
And spared nor man nor woman !

First Woman.

O my God !

Second Woman.

Save us, O Lord, the wolves are in Thy fold !

Third Woman.

God hath forgotten, and our hope is dead ;
We are made nothing in the sight of Heaven !

The Queen.

Peace ! In the presence of a woe so great
Is silence less of anguish than of awe ;
And calm comes o'er the spirit when our fate,
At once grown greater than our will can bear,
Passes to greater Hands. Say, which of you
Women, being mothers, in your helplessness
Have watched your children—blossoms of your
heart—
Perish, or of the famine or the plague ?

First Woman.

Nine children I have borne, and have but three.

Second Woman.

I had but one, O Queen, and she is dead.

The Queen.

But which of you have seen your late-born son
Turn on his brother—slay him with his hand?

Third Woman.

I, in a fever-frenzy while they slept.

The Queen.

Thy pains were short. Thou hadst more sons; but I
Have borne my hope in travail nine long years,
And it hath slain the first-born of my heart;
And not in frenzy, nay, not while they slept.

A Woman.

She quivers as a dead leaf in the flame,
O, if she rest not, surely she will die.

*The Queen.**(She rises and kneels.)*

Amida taken and her streets run blood,
They spare nor man nor woman ! Hear, O Heaven !
O spare this people, for their piteous cry
Shrills to Thy mercy-seat in helplessness,
As the lone bleat of lambs across the storm.
I have a little term to live ; my soul
Could never make its passage to the sky
Thro' smoke of carnage and of blazing homes.
My heart could never rest within the tomb
While such a battle thundered o'er my head.
Thy hand is heavy, Lord ! I fall ! I fall !

*(Re-enter officer.)**Officer.*

The Lord Amraphel waits without.

The Queen (rising).

Admit him !

*(Enter Amraphel.)**Amraphel.*

O Queen, I come to save thee if thou wilt,
To help thee save thy people if thou wilt ;
Give me the legions thou hast lately raised,
Give me the leading of thy palace guards,
And I will save the city from these hordes,
Which I have summoned and alone can stay.
E'en now they halt seven leagues without the walls,

But I will bid them back unto their coasts,
And if they murmur, with thine aid compel,—
If thou wilt grant me this my life-long suit,
If thou wilt stay the hunger of my heart.
Not otherwise ! It is ten years too late !
For I am as a fate, and this my deed
Inevitable as darkness to the day
When planetary forces do compel
An orb to blot the streaming sunlight. Ay !
I am become a fate unto myself
Urged by the force resistless of strong years,
That made me thus. The spirit of old wrongs,
The vows of boyhood fence me in my path,
The resolution of my manhood drives,
And turn, I cannot ! Not for all the love
That sears my being at thy wasting pain,
That might have raised me to my nobler self
And made me as a hammer in God's hand.
No ! for my heart abhorreth sacrifice,
No ! I must bend thee to my will, or break.
Hear my desire, forego this madman's dream,
Wed me, and I will save thee from these hordes.
Take me and trust me ! 'Thou shalt love me still !

The Queen

(going out on to the terrace and pointing upwards).

Trust *thee* ? I lay my trust with Heaven alone,
And in God's shadow shall my people stand.

For there is sound of armour on the air,
The angels in the arsenals of Heaven
Are buckling on their swords. And He shall ride
Commanding terror thro' the teeming clouds,
The brand of lightning in His instant hand,
And wind and thunder flying from His wheels !
And He shall smite our foes and shatter them,
And overwhelm them with a sudden doom,
For pestilence and famine and great fear
Attend the chariot of the God of War.
Our strength is in His arm ; by that alone
We stand invincible before the world !

(Tumult in the Square below.)

The Queen (to the People).

Fear ye, my people? Ye! the angel's charge?
Behold on you the eyes of all the worlds!
Ye, the last glory of creation's day,
The last expression of eternal Truth,
The crowning of the ages,—shall ye fall?
No! by the terror when the thunder spake,
And from the womb of Chaos came the stars!
No! by the tempest and the tearing wind
When first the firmament enwrapt the world!
No! by the earthquake when the hills arose
And shouldered Ocean from their seething backs,
And by the splendour and the shout of Heaven

When Sun and Moon stood forth and held their
sway,

And by the wonder when the stately trees
Shot up from summit and from broadening vale ;
And by the cry when Behemoth abashed
Bowed to the naked majesty of man !
No ! When the soul of man arose in song
The last fulfilment of His earthly praise,
The stately seraphs and the Sons of God
Vowed on the virtue of their swords of fire,
To certify our Truth against the world !

(*Thunder.*)

Ay ! Hearken, O my children, God is nigh.
Can ye not hear the thunder of His wheels ?
The tramp terrific of the sons of wrath
Proclaiming thro' the marches of the storm
The bright battalions of the God of War ?
Shall not our foes flee blinded from His face,
Confronted with the terror of His frown ?

(*Thunder.*)

Hearken, my people ! We are far from fear
The God of Truth forsaketh not His own.

(*There is a cry of wonder from the people. The Queen
staggers back.*)

A Woman.

She wasteth as the flax within the fire ;
O, if she rest not, surely she will die !

(*Re-enter Officer.*)

Officer.

O Queen, behold the force that brought thee aid
From the far lands is shattered ; for this day
The Lord Amraphel with a sudden stroke
Hath turned, met, smote, and crushed them ! They
 are fled,
And the last hope of Erech is struck down.
And the foe halts but five leagues from the walls ;
The people are in panic !

The Queen (falling back on to the couch).

God of war !

O pause upon my sorrows ! Give them peace !
O help me ! I am dying. All my days
Come back to me like shadows. They were sad.

Amraphel.

O Beltis ! Then my coming was for nought ?

The Queen.

Nay, hear me ! Thou hast wrested from my hand
All that thy grasping heart would have. 'Tis thine.
Take, what I cannot—what I would not—hold.
Be merciful to thine. It profits thee.
Leave me this city for to-night in peace ;
To-morrow it is thine. I can no more.

That which thou canst not conquer still is mine,
My faith, my hope's integrity, my Truth.
There I am Queen of kingdoms all mine own.
They, they are mine,—for ever. Fare thee well!

Amraphel.

O Queen, this night thy city lies in peace,
To-morrow it is fenced about with steel.
But I will cleave to mercy for thy sake ;
And thou with me shalt stand in my strong peace,
And I will learn of gentleness. Farewell!

(Amraphel goes out.)

First Woman.

Alas ! the Queen hath swooned !

Second Woman.

How pale she lies,
Like some white moon whose fire is long cold !

The Queen.

My children ! O my children !

Third Woman.

Hush ! she wakes.
Sing to her softly ; steal her from her pain,
That drowsy music filtering thro' her dreams
May glide her slowly with no jar to peace.

First Woman (singing).

Day passeth, and the dews of night are falling ;
On every soul the seal of peace is set ;
And star from star the angel choirs are calling
That Heaven and earth have met.
The labourer loiters thro' the golden gloaming,
Homing, homing ;
Night cometh, and in mercy over all
The shadows fall.

Pain passeth ; as the eye-bright flower enfoldeth
Her petals, by the dews of twilight wet,
Peace, after tears, the weary-hearted holdeth,
That they awhile forget.
O may they find made lighter ere the morrow
All their sorrow !
Sleep cometh, and in mercy over all
The shadows fall.

Life passeth, and behold the water windeth
Crystal or stained to the cleansing sea.
Thro' all the sea-girt isle one murmur mindeth,
One voice,—Eternity.
There is no spirit but its burden haunteth,
'Rest !' it chaunteth.
Night cometh, and in mercy over all
The shadows fall.

The Queen (rising in a last effort).

Nay! Hold unto the sunlight to the last!
Once more to strike for glory! One last stroke!
The fire of God that led me all these years
Dieth not in me yet! Once more to hope!
Our fathers first came forth out of the East,
God led them and God fed them on their way;
Shall we be found less faithful to the Truth?
Nay! Unto this He tried us. This the test!
Unto the wilderness! the wilderness!
Sound ye my trumpets! We set forth to-night.
For He shall lead us as He led our sires,
And His right hand protect us on our way;
And we will seek a fairer, nobler clime,
Where no sad memories of the days of doubt
Shall vex our faith with shadows from the past,—
Unto the wilderness! the wilderness!
I see a city rising in the sun
With towers that spring like symphonies to Heaven,
Upreared by hands that labour but for love,
For love of beauty and the praise of God.
And it is lit with laughter and bright smiles,
And the swift feet of children thro' the streets
Dancing, like foam-flecked streams o'er fields of gold.
And a sweet murmur cometh up from it,
The voice of maidens singing, and soft mirth,
And wafted harmonies and hymn of praise.

And they shall see the symmetry of life,
And learn the quiet of eternal things,—
Oh ! to the wilderness ! the wilderness !
Let us go forth in gladness and with song
Of sweet thanksgiving, and with bridal wreaths,
Laughter of jewels and light-hearted smiles ;
And let my litter be alight with gems,
And let my steeds be garlanded with flowers ;
For this shall be the nuptial of my soul,
Ay, this shall be the crowning of the Truth.
Sound ye my trumpets ! Let the people sing !
Unto the wilderness ! the wilderness !

(Trumpets. The scene is thronged with guards and attendants.)

THE SCENE CLOSES.

INTERLUDE

(The people with flocks and herds are marching over the wilderness.)

Chorus of Women.

Like as a bride that is robed and wreathed
For the bridegroom's kiss,
Goes forth in the dew when the dawn hath breathed
On her dream of bliss,

And she stands by the gate in the crystal prime,
And her kindred weep,
But she speaks not, but smiles from time to time,
As one smiles in sleep.
And the ties of her life and her love dispart,
And the future calls,
And she wonders, and over her rising heart
Silence falls ;—

E'en so in the dawn did we set our feet
Unto hope's bright ways,
And our brows are crowned with a garland sweet
And our lips with praise ;
But our joy and our hope and our fear did cease
As we turned again,
And we looked on the homes where we slept in peace,
Where we wept in pain ;
And we wondering pass where the ways are strange,
And our passing seems
But a passing of shades in the fitful change
Of a land of dreams.

The Disciples.

On and on,
Tho' the ways be drear,
Till the night be gone
And the truth stand clear ;

Thro' the girdling night
To the clear serene
Follow the Light !

Chorus.

We follow our Queen !

Chorus of Men.

As the silvery flocks in the eve return
From the golden hills,
And bleat through the shadowy vales and yearn
For the crystal rills,
And the shepherd that watched through the noon-
day leads
To the freshets cold,
And they follow him over the glimmering meads
To the drowsy fold,—
So our shepherd hath watched through the noon-
day beams
Till the fierce sun set ;
She hath led us unto the living streams,
And she leads us, yet.

Chorus of Children.

Carry us, father ! Feet are sore,
And we long for the mother's bed !

An old Man.

House of my fathers seen no more,
No more ! O would I were dead !

A Rich Man.

Halls that I decked to my heart's desire
Rifled and wrecked and burned !

A Young Man.

Grave where I buried my aged sire
By the foot of a stranger spurned !

Several.

Where shall we build a city as fair
As Erech? A comely place
With her towers as lilies, her marble stair,
And her carven grace?

Chorus of Women.

O Erech, lovelier in regret,
In our lost love's light,
In our shelterless wanderings lovelier yet
For thy shielding might.
For thou stood'st as a Queen that is armed erect
To her gleaming crest,
Whom a glittering girdle of arms protect
To the rounded breast ;

And the crown of thy towers and fanes shone clear
O'er thy circling walls,
And the rising radiance, tier on tier,
Of thy marble halls.

Chorus of old Men.

Daughter of Nimrod, nobly born
Of the giant Hunter of old,
Who crowned thee the Queen of the lands of morn
With thy walls and a store of gold ;
King on king of his lordly line
Made it a boast to set
Tower and fane for his lasting sign,
Glory on glory yet.
No more shall we speak in the spacious ways
Where thy stories in marble gleam,
For thy loveliness is as a name, thy praise
Is as a dream.

Chorus of Men.

For thou liest a pearl on the golden plain
For thy plundering foes,
In the shattering hail and the beating rain
As a snow-white rose ;
And over thy grace shall the hungry flame
Of thy foes prevail,
And for us thou shalt be but a haunting name
And a twilight tale ;

But thy memory o'er the eternal sea
As a peak sublime
Shall stand, tho' as scattering sails are we
On the tides of time.

Chorus of Women.

Why did we leave thee? On thy breast
We wept as a weary child;
Shall we not weep by old woes oppressed
Here in the lonely wild?

Old Women.

The fire on the hearth in the chambers sweet,—
Ah me! how the memories start!—
We have changed for a fire of aching feet
And a fainting fire of heart.

All.

For our ways are weary, the world is wide,
And fitful the light of the soul,
If faith should fail us, what of our guide?
What of our goal?

Chorus of Men.

As birds that are borne from their arrowy track
Thro' the sifted sky,
When over the flats of the streaming rack
The wind rides high,

As ships that are strown thro' the crested seas
By the urging gale,
As leaves that are swept o'er the driving leas
And the eddying vale,—
Thro' the desolate waste we are borne along
By the winds of fear,
And O! that our faith were more sure, more strong,
Or our stars more clear!

Chorus.

I can no more! O let us rest us here!
For we are weary and the night is near;
And memory rises with a wild regret
For all we loved and cannot now forget,
And unblest phantoms of unresting fear;
The past is with us yet.
We look on all we left; alas! we yearn.
Let us return!

SCENE XII

A BARREN HILLSIDE ONE DAY'S JOURNEY FROM ERECH.

Night. The Queen is borne in a litter—torches held by those about her.

The Prophet rides upon a mule beside her.

The people gather round the Queen, murmuring, and their march ceases. Sheep bleat and oxen low in the distance. There is a confusion of bells and voices—as when a great host halts disordered in the darkness.

The guards round the litter of the Queen keep back the throng with their spears.

The Queen raises herself on her litter and speaks. There is a sudden hush of clamorous voices.

The Queen (raising herself on the litter).

Children, it is the parting of the ways.
Hearken, and choose your path this once for all !
For ere this hour the fate of Erech fell,
Amraphel hath preserved it or laid waste.
And even by this journey are ye saved
The peril of the onslaught of the tribes,
Who now are by that strong hand held in leash,
Or sated by full havoc. Therefore, choose !

Those few who follow still the star of Truth,
Go hence in deathless zeal and restless hope,
With faith alone for guidance,—a rough road
That leads unto no earthly paradise ;
Say, will ye go with them ? For I go hence
Another road ; ye cannot go with me.
Say, will ye share their hunger and their hope,
Press thro' the darkness for their radiant crown ?
Ye answer not. Then will ye now turn back
Unto the past, the ways we looked to change ?

The People.

We will return, O Queen, we will return !

(*Tumult.*)

The Queen (sinking back).

My people, ye have chosen ; ye turn back.
I have awakened from the coil of dreams
That but as phantoms eddy round me yet.
For I have found in life for all my love
A world of sorrow even as my hope.
For men may wear and bear the load of fate,
Nor heed nor know the sorrow of it all ;
But some God touches, and they see His light,
And lift a little and aspire and pray
With strife of spirit ; but the load comes down
Sure as a stone, and grinds them unto dust !

Yet are they blessed in their fuller hope ;
For as man's hope is, even so his Heaven.

The People.

Mother, reproach not ; we would follow thee !

The Queen.

My people, ye have chosen ; ye turn back.
Nay, there is no reproach in all my heart ;
For now 'tis past the transient, the unreal,
The strife, the pain have passed, all save the love ;
God's breath at length hath scattered all the shades.
For on the road the night came down so dark,
I dreamed that I had failed, had striven for nought.
Failed ? I have learned at last ! O pain is nought,
And death is nought, and love is all in all !
Tarry ye yet, my people ; these go hence
Who hold forever to the star of Truth,
That is beyond your ken, and as for me,
I too go hence to the same goal, same Truth,
But by another road, more swift, more sure.
Tarry ye but a little, till I go,
And then return once more unto that past
Ye left behind you when ye came this way.
But me ye shall entomb ere ye depart,
Here, on this height and vested as a queen ;
Not with my fathers in a place of kings,
Not with my fathers in old Nimrod's hall,

Here, in my death, as in my life, alone.
Yet not upon the summit, on this slope,
That men may tell my pillar to all time,
'Here on this steep died Beltis, for her heart
Burst with the burden of unresting strife ;
Had she been patient, surer in her faith,
She had attained the holiest height of all.'

The People.

As the Lord heareth, we will do thy will.

The Queen.

O I have loved you, children, and believed !
Your glory from my childhood was my life,
Your pleasure was my peace, your pain my pain,
Hope of your hearts' contentment my heart's light.
This is my consolation,—in your hearts
As in my heart the Truth, God's purpose, sleeps ;
For we have called some murmur from its dream.
Some day it shall awaken,—I have learned
The Truth shall reign at last, the Truth shall reign !
So, if awhile ye suffer, learn of one
Who much hath suffered, that the cup of pain
Brings a sweet opiate silence at the last.
Farewell, O children of my heart ! Farewell !

(There is a smothered cry of misery from the people.)

A Man.

Pity hath barred my throat.

Another.

Speak for me, tears !

Chorus.

When could man ever cry, ' Mother, farewell ' ?

The Queen (to the Prophet).

Master, we two draw nigh by swiftest paths
Unto the Mount of Vision men call death.
And both by ways diverse attain a height
Whence we behold some prospect of its Truth,—
Thou, by the long, smooth road of Wisdom's lore
And constant prayer and upwardness of faith,
I, by the rocky steep of desperate strife,
By hope and hunger and heart's bitterness.
For all my days it seemed my shadow loomed
Over the land I loved so like a curse,
And night by night a wail came to my throne,
The burden of the sorrows of the world.
And there was one beside me on the steep,
Whose hand colossal had confirmed my peace,

Whose strength had borne the burden that I bare,
Whose love had folded all my womanhood,
And lifted up my load of loneliness.
And oft my will inclined unto his suit,
And oft my weariness looked on his strength ;
But some blind hope, some fire within my heart,
Forbade that I should rest before my term.
Surely it is so with the strong on earth,
They most are helpless in the tide of things ;
For where the weak are free for weal or woe,
God setteth bounds for us in all our ways
For His own purpose, and our weal is nought.
Now I have learned that ever in the heart
Is that which knoweth all things ; to have faith
Is to commit one's way to that which knows,
And doubting not, nor resting, to the end
To follow one truth in the trust of all.
But groping then with no clear light without,
Nought but the restlessness of fire within,
In loneliness I learned and weariness.
Hope is not in rebellion ; yea, I learned,
By pity and by patience more than pain,
The heart's salvation is in sacrifice.
Then, then thou camest, and thy lifting hand
Set me beside thee on the surer road,
Whence I look back upon my ascent of life.
O Master, tell me this, How had my soul
Strength unto such a steep, o'er rocks so sharp ?

The Prophet.

Daughter, out of thy pity was thy strength,
That is th' Invincible, the God in thee.
Thy love hath lit the fire within thy heart,
In love thou hadest strength unto the slope.
And if the cliffs were steep and sharp to wound,
Where feet may fail is wider scope for wings,
And pain hath spurred thee hither to the height.
Yea I believe that ere all time thou too,
With everything that suffereth on the earth,
Consentedst so to suffer, so to be,
For some great Truth 'tis ours in time to know.
In patience let us then possess our souls,
For so confess we our Eternity.

The Queen (rising).

Ay, patient, and more faithful and more sure
Upon the steeper cliffs of fuller life !
For Love alone is Truth, is God in all,
The Fire that vivifies the Universe.
Ay, Love containeth Faith, and Love is glad,
Marching forever to the timeless heights,—
Shall we accept the pain, deny the power ?
Nay, I have learned my lesson, I will go.
And so farewell ! I breast the crowning height,
Another veil is cleft, another world
Breaks on the clearer vision of the soul,
Where God is glassed more perfect to our sight,

Ay, on and on, new pains to conquer yet,
New cliffs to climb, new dreams, new lights to lead,
New hopes, new hungers, to Eternity!

(Dies. A great silence falls upon the people.)

The Prophet.

Pass on, O Queen, unto thy crowning height,
Thou crownéd among women to all time!
For thou hast seen the Vision e'en as I
In darkness deeper and 'mid sterner strife,
Hast pressed by steeper paths unto God's praise,
And so dost pass before me to His peace.

Chorus.

Alas! the soul of Erech there lies dead!
An ancient nation dies in thee, O Queen.
Our glory is overthrown, our praise is past,—
We are made nothing in the sight of Heaven.

(From all the host goes up a cry of lamentation.)

The Prophet.

Fear not! God loves you. Be ye comforted.
Behold a sign I give unto your steps.
There is a promise of the first of days
Born in the trackless twilight of the times,—
Whether old prophets who before the Flood
Walked, as men have it, with the living God,
Adam or Enoch or the sire of Noah,
Heard and revealed it to console mankind,—

Whether old mages read it in the stars,
Scanning the scroll God wrapt around the world
Writ with these storied hieroglyphs of light
By His bright finger,—who may know? It stands,
A witness to that immemorial hope
Concerning that Redeemer to be born,
Whither the upward face of all the times
Presses, despite the darkness of the soul.

(Pointing to the stars.)

About the tree on which the world doth turn
The blazing Dragon in his pride is curled,
Whose tail doth draw the third part of the stars.
He is the emblem of primæval night,
Upon whose head a Glorious Form doth kneel,
The Seed of woman who shall free the world.
Yet tho' He slay him, He must suffer. See!
The fiery jaws are closing on His heel!
Suffer? Behold the keystone of the dome,
That crowns the zenith with the act of love,
The latest witness unto God in man,
The surest lodestar of the Universe!
We know not whence this hope, but it is true,
The Fount of Life shall be the Fount of Love,—
When evermore we hunger in our heart
And look to Him to perfect us in praise,
Oh! Shall He mock us?—We may sleep in peace,
Who know to feed the Stranger in our gates.—

*(The Prophet raises his hand to bless them, and the people
all kneel down in the darkness.)*

Lord of the stars, whose thoughts have been my
search
And the illumination of my heart,
Give light to these Thy children at the last !
That in the twilight tho' their day be dark
They see the loftier splendour of Thy Truth ;
That in the twilight they may sleep in faith,
As sure to lie as ever in Thy love,
As sure at last to praise as sure to see,
When the Day breaketh thro' these earthly shades,
And all the doors of darkness are unsealed !

(The Prophet goes with his disciples. The people remain kneeling in silence broken only by weeping.)

Chorus.

Farewell ! The night receives him from our eyes ;
And O ! the night comes down upon our soul.
Our stars we have outwatched, our hopes outwept,
Our fears outfevered, and our grief outmourned.
To-morrow we may weep, to-night is silence.—

(A pause.)

A Voice behind.

Thunder of hasting hoofs upon the road !

Chorus.

It is Amraphel ; we can smile at fate.

(Enter Amraphel and soldiers on horseback and in armour.)

Amraphel.

Ho ! craven slaves ! Would ye forsake your Queen ?
Stand forth like men and face her foes and fight !
Or fall like coward priests unto your prayers,
And call upon your Champion for His shield !
Ye wooed the smiles of His benevolence ;
Evoke the mortal thunders of His wrath !
Ye stand in silence ; answer on your lives !
Your Queen—hath she gone hence ? Hath she gone
far ?

A Man.

Ay, Lord, she hath gone hence,—yet is not far.

Amraphel.

How going ? How attended ? In what strength ?

Another.

Queenly as ever, and victorious still.

Amraphel.

Lead me there swiftly ! Bring me to the Queen !

First Man.

Said I not unto thee, She is not far ?

*(They open a passage before him. Amraphel approaches
the litter and sees the body of the Queen.)*

Amraphel.

And is it thus, O Queen, thus triumphing,
I meet thee, thus victorious to the end?
O thou wast as the measure of my deeds,
Without thee is nor triumph nor defeat.
I wander as a star in darkness lost
Of infinite space, none other star to see,
I feast on fruits long-laboured, turned to dust,
Insatiate, and with ashes crown my head,
My sword is rusted thro', my shield is stained,
My wine is tainted and my cup defiled,
My lightless throne is thronged with shades of men,
My place is left unto me desolate!

Chorus.

O days and hours of Life! a breath of glory
Sweeping thro' silence over broken strings
Just waking with its wings
A passing melody of quivering story;
Each cadence ere it dies
Falls to the deep and sighs,
Bringing it nearer to th' enfolding silence, whence it
springs.

Voice of Angels (to the Disciples).

Lift your eyes
To the wells of light,
That your hearts be wise
And your ways be bright !
For all thanksgiving
Is upward strife,
And love of living
The law of life ;
And the soul that flies
For the living Fire
Hath his desire
Forever in sight !

The Disciples (in the distance).

Star on Star
In their glittering dance
Quivering hurled
Thro' the void of space,—
Gleaming far
In their blinding glance,
World on world
In a girdle of grace,—
Reel and roll
In the large control
Of the infinite Soul
Of their wondrous race !

THE BLIND PROPHET

From the woodland ways,
From the starry skies,
The refrains of praise
Thro' the worlds arise ;
For the quickening Soul
Thro' it all is one,
Where the systems roll
To the central sun,
Where the seeds are sown
In their wind-born shield,
And the suns are strown
Thro' the starry field.

Chorus.

O Hope, O Soul of Life! Thy light betraying,
Darkling we stray thro' desolated years.
Ours are no more the fears
That in the midnight silence found us praying.
Nor look we in Love's eyes,
Lest we therein surprise
Some memory to quench its light in unavailing
tears.

*The Disciples.**

Shall the story
Of quivering light
Stand to our eyes
For His perfect sign,

That the glory
Of worlds more bright
Peaceful skies
For our souls enshrine?
Have we brought
From the worlds we sought
Word of nought
That is more divine?

Thine the springs
Of the infinite life;
Thine the breath
Of the restless fire;
Thine the wings
Of the upward strife,
Life thro' death
Pressing higher and higher.
Lo! Thou art
In the kindling heart
The awakening start
Of divine desire.

Chorus.

O Memory, yoke of Life! to thine old burden,
Thy whelming load of desolate regret,
Is laid one misery yet,
That hope once more hath sorrow for its guerdon.

And Faith, once more defiled,
Weeps that she ever smiled,
And lying crushed in fond despair, prays never to
forget.

The Disciples.

How shall we find thee?
Set our feet
'Mid the springing flowers
Of Thy windy ways?
Striving behind Thee,
Offering meet
Upward hours
And aspiring days.
Never shall dearth
Of the things of earth
Stay the birth
Of an hour of praise.

For the Life that thrills
Thro' the varied fields
As He dreams He wills
And the season yields;
For the worlds as words
In His thought He weaves
From the glittering birds
To the spiral leaves;

And the Thought that shields
The engendering seed,
In His Truth conceives
And creates our need.

Chorus.

O Death, O shade of Life ! once more forsaken
Of all save thee, Mother of the oppressed,
We look unto thy breast
As weary children, nevermore to waken,
Asking no more of thee
Save to Eternity
Silence and darkness and the boon of an unbroken
rest.

*(The people with the body of the Queen gradually sink
away into the darkness. The faithful are seen
marching over the crest of the hills towards the
dawn, which slowly widens.)*

Choir of Angels (to the Disciples).

Lift your eyes
To the wells of light,
That your hearts be wise
And your ways be bright !
For all thanksgiving
Is upward strife,
And love of living
The law of life ;

THE BLIND PROPHET

And the prayers of faith
Are as words of fire
In the kindling breath
Of divine desire.

The Disciples.

Hear, O Lord,
Of the quickening light,
Thou the chord
Of the worlds to be !
When on our eyes
There falls the night
This be the prize
That we ask of Thee,
Life, more life,
'Mid the storms more rife,
Strength and strife
To Eternity !

Life forever
To run and rise !
Strife forever
That soaring sings !
Death the mount
Of the opening eyes !
Faith the fount
Of the fiery springs !

Storm, not rest,
On the burning crest,
Storm for the test
Of unfolding wings !

So we climb
Thro' ascending spheres,
Nought is time
Or the tracks of tears ;
Nought is death
But the clouds that flee
From the riving breath
Of Eternity ;
Veils that shrine
The more perfect sign,
Life divine,
Of the Truth in Thee !

*(The Disciples pass out of sight over the brow of the hill,
the Prophet leading them. The sun rises over the
ridge in a glory of golden cloudlets.)*

Choir of Angels.

To the upward eyes
Is the guiding light,
And the hearts that arise
With a song are bright ;